United Nations A/71/PV.26

General Assembly

Seventy-first session

Official Records

26th plenary meeting
Monday, 10 October 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Thomson ..... (Fiji)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Peeseen de Buyzswerve (Belgium), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda items 9 and 13 (*continued*)

Report of the Economic and Social Council

Report of the Economic and Social Council (A/71/3)

Note by the Secretary-General (A/71/155)

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): In connection with agenda item 9, I would like to recall that, pursuant to resolution 58/316, of 1 July 2004, the Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided, at its 2nd plenary meeting, held on 16 September, to consider agenda item 9 in its entirety in plenary meeting, on the understanding that the administrative programme and budgetary aspects should be dealt with by the Fifth Committee.

At the same meeting, the Assembly took note of the clarification that, in implementing resolution 58/316 to consider item 9 in its entirety in plenary meeting, the relevant parts of Chapter I of the report (A/71/3) that are under agenda items already allocated to the Main Committees would be considered by the Committee concerned for final action by the General Assembly.

In connection with agenda item 13, members will recall that, pursuant to resolution 57/270 B, the Assembly decided to consider under the item the chapters of the annual report of the Economic and Social Council relevant to the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, including through the participation of the President of the Council in its discussions.

I now give the floor to the President of the Economic and Social Council, His Excellency Mr. Oh Joon, to introduce the report of the Council.

Mr. Oh Joon (President, Economic and Social Council): I have the honour to introduce to the General Assembly the 2016 report (A/71/3) of the Economic and Social Council.

Entering its seventieth year, the 2016 session of the Council focused on what was needed for the initial implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. That included the work of the Council's segments and forums, of the various functional and regional commissions,and of expert bodies, all of which are instrumental in the integrated implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The 2016 session of the Council provided a common space for Governments and stakeholders to come together to advance sustainable development and other key issues. Please allow me to briefly share some highlights of the session.

First, the Council conducted its primary follow-up and review of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

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was successfully held under the theme "Ensuring that no one is left behind". Twenty-two countries presented their voluntary national reviews on how they planned to achieve the ambitious vision embodied in the 2030 Agenda. The inaugural Economic and Social Council Forum on Financing for Development follow-up provided a solid, dedicated and inclusive platform for substantive deliberations on how to finance sustainable development, along with a follow-up to the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

Secondly, we explored ways for the United Nations system to respond more effectively to the changes in the development landscape. The Development Cooperation Forum deliberated on ways to improve the alignment of the United Nations development system with the demands of the new Agenda. The Economic and Social Council dialogue on the subject of the longer-term positioning of the United Nations development system offered an opportunity for Member States to consider ways to equip the United Nations to better support the implementation of the new Agenda. I am confident that the dialogue will be able to contribute to implementing resolution 67/226, on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review this year, which will be a significant tool for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Thirdly, the Council enhanced its relevance to what is happening in the world by addressing emerging global threats, challenges and humanitarian emergencies. It held a special meeting on inequality, and special briefings on the Zika virus and the El Niño phenomenon. It also advanced integrated responses to peace and sustainable development.

Last but not least, the Council strengthened multi-stakeholder partnerships through its meetings and forums, including the Partnership Forum and Youth Forum. We had a chance to hear diverse voices from civil society, the private sector and academia in our global dialogue on a sustainable future. The huge interest shown by various segments of society highlighted the need for us to engage more effectively with all relevant actors in a spirit of partnership and inclusion. That interest, which is described in more detail in the report, illustrates how the Council has captured the spirit and the vision of the new global development agenda. The entire Economic and Social Council system has a central role to play in realizing this vision. We should therefore build on the work already carried out and strengthen the momentum generated by the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the other milestone agreements of the past year. Moving forward, we need to focus on establishing a collaborative platform that will support our concrete actions to achieve the future we want.

A renewed spirit of cooperation on the part of all will be key in overcoming the daunting tasks ahead to achieve the SDGs. For the United Nations, development is a realm in which a win-win approach is not only possible but almost inevitable. The cooperative efforts and commitments of all Member States and relevant stakeholders are critical for the entire United Nations development system, with the Economic and Social Council at its core.

On behalf of the 2016 session of the Economic and Social Council Bureau, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the strong collaboration and support of Member States and the United Nations development system. I am confident that the Council, as guided by its new President, His Excellency Ambassador Frederick Shava, will work to successfully achieve its objectives for the 2017 session. I invite all members to continue their engagement and cooperation with the Economic and Social Council at the current session.

Mr. De Lara Rangel (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, on behalf of the Government and the people of Mexico, allow me to extend our sincerest condolences to our brotherly nation Haiti at this difficult and painful time.

My delegation appreciates the presentation of the report (A/71/3) of the Economic and Social Council for 2016.

For Mexico, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a State commitment. In assuming its international responsibility on the global stage, Mexico has focused its efforts on ensuring that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) bring about truly great transformations on our peace and security agenda and in the way in which the United Nations works to build a peaceful world for future generations. The transformative change towards a new peace paradigm, known as "sustainable peace", places human beings at the centre of our collective action. In particular, this peace is solidly based on sustainable and inclusive development, combating poverty and inequality and providing access to justice and the rule of law as the most effective means of preventing conflict and improving people's lives.

To implement the 2030 Agenda, Mexico supports the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council so that it can propose sound public policies, including through the High-level Political Forum, at which, last July, Mexico presented its programme and described its progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The review of the Economic and Social Council scheduled for 2017 must also improve the Council's role as a platform for 30 subsidiary bodies and the various social and economic actors committed to the 2030 Agenda. As we have repeatedly said, it is of vital importance that there should be no attempt to adapt the Agenda to the existing structures and inert practices of the Organization.

To achieve the desired coherence, the Economic and Social Council must ensure that there is no duplication of roles and mandates with other United Nations funds, programmes, bodies and specialized agencies and must foster synergies with the General Assembly. In that regard, the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review, which we are now beginning, provides an opportunity for generating urgent and necessary changes in the development pillar, based on dialogue on the long-term positioning of the United Nations development system and carried out within the framework of the Economic and Social Council. It is also necessary to consider the particularities of middle-income countries, which continue to confront considerable challenges to development.

Mexico is committed to advancing several of the issues on the Economic and Social Council agenda that are aligned with the 2030 Agenda. By way of example, we rely on the adoption of the New Urban Agenda in Quito so that we can reinvent our cities from a sustainable perspective, while improving equity and well-being and reducing exclusion and sociospatial segregation. And in December my country will host in Cancun the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, given our commitment as an extremely diverse country to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

In May 2017, Mexico will also provide the venue at which the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction will assess the Sendai Framework in the light of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and will set targets for risk reduction and mitigation. We firmly believe that, given climate change, rapid urbanization and water-management difficulties, inter alia, the risk of disaster is never zero. For that reason, President Peña Nieto, together with President Gurib-Fakim of Mauritius, has co-chaired the High-level Panel on Water since the beginning of the year. The Panel's action plan, which was launched by its 11 high-level members a few weeks ago, will enable States and diverse stakeholders to coordinate their actions.

In order to leave no one behind, we must ensure that cooperation for development is more effective and predictable, pursuant to paragraph 58 of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. In that regard, the collaboration of the United Nations system with forums such as the Global Alliance for Effective Cooperation on Development can prepare for a new transformative vision for sustainable development.

The Assembly can count on our active and constructive participation in all related work.

Mr. Sinha (India): India attaches great importance to the work of the Economic and Social Council. We commend the outgoing President and the Bureau for their stewardship of its activities.

I would like to extend our congratulations to the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Zimbabwe on his resumption of the current presidency of the Economic and Social Council, and would like to assure him of our steadfast support to him and his Bureau in their work. We are grateful for the report (A/71/3) of the Economic and Social Council for the year 2016, which usefully enumerates the activities of the Council.

We would like to congratulate the Economic and Social Council for organizing the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, convened under its auspices, the first since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Forum offered a place for policymakers from around the world to exchange their ideas on how to accelerate the implementation of the far-reaching 2030 Agenda in a consistent, effective manner. It included voluntary national reviews by 22 countries and thematic reviews of progress on the Sustainable Development Goals.

Fully committed to ensuring a life of dignity for all its people, India intends to present its voluntary national review at the Assembly session next year, with the aim of sharing its experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. We have integrated the Sustainable Development Goals framework into

our national development strategy. We have decided to dedicate one day in each session of our Parliament for discussions focused solely on the progress made on the SDGs. India's success in sustaining robust economic growth to eradicate poverty will contribute in no small measure to the global achievement of the SDGs. The process of doing so will bring forth technologies and pathways to progress that can be shared with other developing countries to enable them to achieve sustainable development.

As we move forward, the realization of the developed countries' commitments to resource mobilization for strengthening capacities and technical assistance to developing countries will be critical. In that regard, we think the technology facilitation mechanism will be instrumental. An important achievement of the Economic and Social Council in that context was the discussion organized at the first annual multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals, to which all relevant stakeholders actively contributed in their areas of expertise. We are sure that at the next session the Forum will again further build upon its existing strength.

We commend the efforts of the Economic and Social Council in organizing the 2016 inaugural Forum on Financing for Development follow-up, which provided a solid platform for susbstantive deliberation with the representatives of intergovernmental bodies and the senior management of the Bretton Woods Institutions, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. They affirmed strong commitment to the full and timely implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and recognized that it provides a global framework for financing sustainable development and is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, while supporting and complementing it and helping to contextualize its means of implementation targets with concrete policies and action.

At a meeting organized by the Economic and Social Council, experts analysed the phenomenon of El Niño, which has affected more than 60 million people, and recommended implementing the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change in a coherent and integrated manner.

To facilitate the early entry into force of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, India deposited its instrument of ratification earlier this month. As part of our intended nationally determined contribution, we begin to move forward on the road to climate action. India will reduce its emissions intensity by 35 per cent, build a 40 per cent capacity of power generation from non-fossil fuels and create an additional carbon sink of 2.5 billion tons through various afforestation policies. India remains committed to fully embracing the Sendai Framework, and our Prime Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi, released this year in that regard the national disaster management plan. A month from now, in early November, in collaboration with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, India will host in New Delhi the biennial Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, under the theme "Risk-sensitive development for community resilience".

We are happy to note that the theme for the next High-level Political Forum will be eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world. It is our expectation that the Economic and Social Council will address the sustainable development challenges, with poverty eradication as our central and overarching objective. The Economic and Social Council dialogues have been able to set the tone for the forthcoming Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review. We expect it to provide long-term strategic guidance vis-à-vis the 2030 Agenda for the United Nations development system for the years ahead. Member States should be able to count on a coherent, effective and efficient United Nations system that is focused on those services the system is uniquely qualified to deliver, based on solid intergovernmental guidance and supported with a predictable and adequate volume of flexible resources.

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate India's commitment to the work of the Economic and Social Council and its active and constructive engagement in its work in the coming months.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on today's agenda items.

May I take it that the General Assembly takes note of the report of the Economic and Social Council, contained in document A/71/3?

It was so decided.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 9 and of agenda item 13.

Agenda item 117

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit: specific meeting focused on development

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with resolution 60/265, dated 30 June 2006, on the follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit, a specific meeting focused on development should be held. I have been informed that no Member State has requested to take the floor under this item.

The General Assembly has thus ended this stage of its consideration of agenda item 117.

Programme of work

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): As announced today in *The Journal of the United Nations*, I would like to inform members that delegations that wish to be added to the list of speakers for the plenary meetings of the General Assembly should make their wishes known through the e-delegates portal located at http://delegates.un.int. The e-speakers link has been open since 9 a.m. today. An automated e-mail acknowledgement will be sent within one hour of receipt of inscription. For inquiries with regard to user names and passwords, kindly contact the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management help desk at help-desk@un.org. For any other inquiries with regard to the list of speakers, please contact the list of speakers officer in the General Assembly Affairs Branch.

The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.

United Nations A/71/PV.27

General Assembly

Seventy-first session

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27th plenary meeting
Thursday, 13 October 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Thomson ..... (Fiji)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Tribute to the memory of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, the late King of Thailand

The President: It is my sad duty to pay tribute to the memory of the late King of Thailand, His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, who passed away on Thursday, 13 October 2016. On behalf of the General Assembly, I request the representative of the Kingdom of Thailand to convey our condolences to the royal family, the Government and the people of Thailand.

May I now invite representatives to stand and observe a minute of silence in tribute to the memory of the late King.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silence.

The President: A formal tribute in the General Assembly will be convened at a later date, to be announced.

Agenda item 113

Appointment of the Secretary-General of the United Nations

Letter from the President of the Security Council to the President of the General Assembly (A/71/531)

Draft resolution (A/71/L.4)

The President: I now call on the President of the Security Council, who will report to the Assembly on the work undertaken by the Council on the appointment of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): It is an honour for me, in my capacity as President of the Security Council for the month of October, to address the General Assembly in order to convey the recommendation of the Security Council for the appointment of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

At its 7782nd meeting, held in private on 6 October, the Security Council adopted by acclamation resolution 2311 (2016) concerning the recommendation for the appointment of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

I shall now read out the text of the resolution. Resolution 2311 (2016) reads as follows:

"The Security Council,

"Having considered the question of the recommendation for the appointment of the Secretary-General of the United Nations,

"Recommends to the General Assembly that Mr. António Guterres be appointed Secretary-General of the United Nations for a term of office from 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2021."

In the joint letter of the President of the Security Council and the President of the General Assembly dated 15 December 2015, the Council pledged to conclude its part in the selection process in a timely manner, so that the newly appointed Secretary-General

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would have sufficient time to prepare for the job. The Council is pleased that, by adopting its recommendation for the appointment on 6 October, the Council met that objective. The Security Council believes that early action on the appointment by the General Assembly would provide the new Secretary-General with enough time to prepare for performing his duties.

On behalf of the Security Council, I would like to express appreciation to all Member States that nominated candidates as part of the selection process. I would also like to express appreciation to the candidates who have actively participated in the process. During the informal meetings with each of them, the Council had the opportunity to evaluate their high professional skills and commitment to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

The Security Council adopted resolution 2311 (2016) by acclamation. Accordingly, the members of the Security Council expressed their unconditional support for Mr. António Guterres, who, if appointed today, will head our common Organization.

In conclusion, I would like to thank you, Sir, for having convened this meeting expeditiously following the recommendation made to the General Assembly by the Security Council.

The President: In connection with the recommendation of the Security Council, the General Assembly has before it a draft resolution issued as document A/71/L.4. The draft was prepared following extensive consultations between me, special advisers on my behalf, and the United Nations membership. Throughout those consultations, a number of consistent priorities held by Member States emerged, and in that context, I want to thank all of them for their inputs, which were fundamental in the preparation of the text.

During the drafting process, I was conscious of the need to reflect the historic advances that had been made in the process of the selection and appointment of the Secretary-General, in line with resolutions 69/321 and 70/305. That included the acknowledgement of the transparent and inclusive process that was undertaken, from the informal dialogues, which were conducted between the General Assembly and each of the candidates, to the unprecedented level of cooperation between the Presidents of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

The main task was to reflect, within the framework of the draft resolution on the appointment, the committed support for the process that was undertaken and the expectations of Member States. With the reaffirmation of the role of the General Assembly, the reference to Chapter XV of the Charter of the United Nations and the recognition of resolutions 69/321 and 70/305 as the cornerstones of the process, I am confident that the text before the Assembly fully reflects the views of Member States.

After the extensive consultations that I have had with the membership, it is my understanding that the General Assembly wishes to proceed with the adoption of draft resolution A/71/L.4 by acclamation.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt by acclamation draft resolution A/71/L.4?

Draft resolution A/71/L.4 was adopted by acclamation (resolution 71/4).

The President: I now request the Chief of Protocol to escort the Secretary-General-designate, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, to the platform.

The Chief of Protocol escorted the Secretary-General-designate, Mr. António Guterres, to the platform.

The President: I have the honour to announce that His Excellency Mr. António Guterres has been appointed by acclamation Secretary-General of the United Nations for a term of office beginning on 1 January 2017 and ending on 31 December 2021.

Today is indeed a momentous day. Since 1946, this is only the ninth time that the General Assembly has taken action on the appointment of a new Secretary-General. It is inherently a decision of deep consequence, as the entire membership agrees to the appointment of an individual to lead the United Nations. The process undertaken so as to arrive at today's decision has been a historic one.

It was shaped from the outset through committed engagement on the part of the General Assembly. For the first time in the history of the United Nations, the selection and appointment process for the Secretary-General has been guided by the principles of transparency and inclusivity. The process began with the first-ever joint call from the Presidents of the General Assembly and Security Council formally soliciting

candidates for the job. From the outset, it acknowledged the importance of geographic and gender balance and explicitly invited the candidacies of women.

It was a process that specifically sought out candidates who embody a firm commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, exemplify the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity, and have shown proven leadership and managerial abilities, extensive experience in international relations and strong diplomatic communication and multilingual skills.

And throughout it all, the process emphasized the need to secure the best possible candidate for the role. Thirteen candidates of the highest standards were presented for consideration, seven of them women. From the moment of the presentation of their nominations, their candidatures were subject to full public view with the joint circulation of letters, the establishment of a dedicated website and the presentation of each candidate's vision for the Organization. All candidates were given and took the opportunity to participate in informal dialogues with the United Nations membership, a process deeply enriched by the engagement of civil society and the wider global public.

Throughout the process, a number of key messages began to resonate from Member States — the desire to continue to see an independent and courageous Secretary-General who will make full use of the powers provided for him in the Charter of the United Nations; a person who is committed to ensuring that the United Nations both embraces and exemplifies gender equality at all levels; a person with the deftness and skills to innovate and adapt the Organization's structures, capacities, culture and capabilities to respond to today's major challenges; and the acknowledgment of the importance of geographic and gender balance in senior posts.

I congratulate Mr. Guterres on having emerged as the best candidate from such a historic, rigorous and comprehensive process. Mr. Guterres embodies the highest standards of competence, integrity and leadership needed for the position, and he brings with him vast experience from his time as the Prime Minister of Portugal and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. His dedication to the ideals and common values of the United Nations is beyond doubt. I am confident that Mr. Guterres will serve the global community with dedication as a moral authority and be the voice of our collective conscience and humanity throughout his term.

I assure Mr. Guterres of my full support throughout the seventy-first session of the General Assembly and will do everything within my power to facilitate a smooth transition process. I am pleased to say that he has accepted my invitation to meet with the General Assembly on 19 October in order to begin a dialogue on critical, priority and emerging issues for the Organization. Once again, congratulations to Mr. Guterres.

It is now my honour to give the floor to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General: Before turning to our agenda item, I would like to offer my deep condolences to the royal family, the Government and the people of Thailand on the passing of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej. His Majesty King Adulyadej was revered by the people of Thailand as a unifying national leader. He was also highly respected internationally. At this time of sorrow and loss, I hope that Thailand will continue to honour King Adulyadej's legacy of commitment to the universal values and respect for human rights.

Above all, to the Secretary-General-designate, I offer my best wishes and congratulations.

I commend the Member States not only for their choice of Secretary-General but also for the way in which they went about making that choice. The first-ever public hearings on the selection of a Secretary-General opened the process to the world. Several highly qualified women and men were given a unique platform from which to share their vision and answer questions from the diplomatic community and civil society. Those new steps established a new benchmark for openness and engagement.

Secretary-General-designate Guterres is well known to all of us in the Hall, but he is perhaps the best known where it counts most — on the front lines of armed conflict and humanitarian suffering. For the past decade, the work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian actors has provided a lifeline for millions upon millions of people forced from their homes. They also received something else — compassion. The same solidarity was at the heart of the High Commissioner's effective advocacy around the globe.

Mr. Guterres also brings deeds and solid political experience, including his two terms of service as Prime Minister of Portugal. His political instincts are those of the United Nations — cooperation for the common good and shared responsibility for people and the planet. He recognizes the crucial importance of women's empowerment from peace-negotiations tables to the halls of this house. As an active participant in the Senior Management Group and the Chief Executives Board, he understands the inner workings of our Organization. I have long valued his advice and admired his spirit of service. He is a wonderful choice to steer this Organization as we build on the progress of the past decade, while addressing the insecurity and uncertainties of today's world.

The Secretary-General-designate has often shared his feelings on the privilege of being a part of the United Nations. Despite all the challenges, he said, "This is still the best place in the world to work". After 10 years, I could not agree more. Today's ceremony is also poignant for me, since it takes place 10 years after the day of my own election in 2006. As I prepare to hand over the baton of leadership, I know that Member States, the outstanding women and men of the United Nations and the people of the world are all looking forward to his tenure with confidence and excitement.

I congratulate him and wish him great success.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

It is now my honour to give the floor to the representative of the Niger, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Wafy (Niger): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of African States on this important occasion of the appointment of the next Secretary-General, under agenda item 113.

The African Group welcomes the commitment to remaining faithful to the General Assembly's call for increased transparency and inclusivity in the selection and appointment of the next Secretary-General, in accordance with article 97 of the Charter of the United Nations. It therefore fully endorses the approach taken in adopting the President's text by acclamation, which, among other things, appoints Mr. António Guterres as Secretary-General for a term of office beginning on 1 January 2017 and ending on 31 December 2021.

The African Group extends its heartiest congratulations to Mr. António Guterres on his designation to take the helm of the United Nations, bringing on board a wealth of experience in global affairs, and it further assures him of the African Group's full support and commitment in the discharge of his mandate. The African Group is particularly encouraged by the transparency and inclusivity that guided the selection process, which re-enforced the legitimacy of the General Assembly and, indeed, the nomination of Mr. Guterres. Our deepest gratitude goes out to His Excellency Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, President of the General Assembly at its seventieth session, for his exemplary leadership throughout the selection process, as well as to you, Mr. President, for leading the process to its logical conclusion.

I cannot conclude without seizing this opportunity to commend, on behalf of the African Group, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his laudable achievements, albeit under very difficult circumstances. Particularly notable are his enduring legacies of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

In conclusion, the African Group looks forward to the upcoming informal meeting of the General Assembly plenary with the Secretary-General-designate, to be held on 19 October, as a unique opportunity to further engage on issues of priority and interest to the African Group and more broadly, on how to make the United Nations fit for purpose.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Kuwait, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait): I have the honour and privilege today to address the General Assembly on behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States on the occasion of the adoption of resolution 71/4, which endorses the Security Council recommendation to appoint Mr. António Guterres as the ninth Secretary-General for five years beginning 1 January 2017.

I would like to begin by taking this opportunity to thank our current Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, who over the past 10 years has served the United Nations with dignity and humility. We are proud that Mr. Ban is from our region. He has inspired global development for the future by pushing for advancements in the areas of women's empowerment, gender equality, human rights and climate change. His tireless efforts

resulted, inter alia, in the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which will enter into force on 4 November. Also highly commendable was his drive to ensure that the work of the Millennium Development Goals would not be lost. He promoted the post-2015 development agenda, which includes the assurance that no one will be left behind, by encouraging Member States to adopt the Sustainable Development Goals to help protect the planet for future generations.

We would like to thank him for his many years of service to the Organization, and we wish him well in all of his future endeavours. We reconfirm our commitment and support for him as he continues to serve out his remaining 78 days in office.In this occasion, we would also like to take the opportunity to thank Mrs. Ban Soon-taek, who has steadfastly stood by her husband during his 10 years as Secretary-General and played an active role by travelling around the world with him to advocate the ideals of the United Nations. She has helped to organize and has actively participated in numerous events to fund humanitarian activities, such as the United Nations International Bazaar. She also worked to advance the rights of children, women and senior citizens by bringing attention to issues such as autism and violence against women, and for that, we truly thank her.

I am pleased and honoured, on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group, to extend our sincere congratulations to Mr. António Guterres on his election as Secretary-General. Mr. Guterres' election signals an era of change at the United Nations in the procedure for the selection of the Secretary-General, which this year involved public hearings, informal dialogue, a global town hall meeting and meetings with all United Nations regional groups. Never has the selection process been more open and transparent.

Throughout the six straw polls taken by the Security Council, Mr. Guterres was a clear favourite for the position. Moreover, Mr. Guterres' extensive knowledge and expertise, clearly reflected in the interactive dialogue held with him in the General Assembly, enabled him to gain unanimous support from its Members. Mr. Guterres has presented a clear vision for the role of the United Nations that provides all Member States with renewed hope for the future. He brings to the position a wealth of knowledge, professional skill, vision, experience and wisdom as a veteran politician and leader, showing leadership abilities that will serve him well in the role of Secretary-General.

The Asia-Pacific Group welcomes Secretary-General designate António Guterres and wishes him success in fulfilling that central role at an exceedingly critical time in the history of the United Nations. Mr. Guterres' undeniable commitment is the stronghold of the platform and the priorities that he envisions. The States members of the Asia-Pacific Group pledge their firm support to him in encountering the new and emerging challenges that lie ahead. That unified support embodies the confidence of knowing that the Secretary-General-designate is well suited to head our Organization.

We all aspire to put an end to the prolonged conflicts transpiring in certain parts of our world, which constitute threats to international peace and security. We stand with the Secretary-General-designate in his coming efforts to mediate those grave disputes. We believe that his leadership, together with our collective efforts encompassing the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations as an integral tool, will assist in attaining a peaceful solution and reconciliation.

We remain confident that, in the light of the need to promote development and growth, the Secretary-General-designate will persevere in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, with high hopes for their ultimate realization. His statesmanship and years of diplomacy will foster further strengthening of the structure of the United Nations. While reinforcing multilateralism, Mr. Guterres will, we trust, engage in the ongoing reform of the United Nations, as revitalization will ensure the Organization's resilience in tackling the various challenges faced.

Terrorism, violent extremism, xenophobia, racism, religious intolerance and their ramifications have led to daunting concerns worldwide. They are among the foremost issues on which the Secretary-General-designate needs to raise awareness and counter the resulting threats through international cooperation.

As Mr. Guterres assumes the position of Secretary-General, I wish to quote Sir Isaac Newton, one of the most historically influential people, with the hope that it will serve him well in his effort to pacify social tensions, "We build too many walls and not enough bridges". We, the States members of the Asia-Pacific Group, trust that he will confront relevant issues with resolute determination. It is our hope that, under his leadership, we, as nations united, will build the bridges

needed to pave the way to a peaceful, prosperous and just world.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Georgia, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Mr. Imnadze (Georgia): I am honoured to make this statement on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States. It is my great pleasure to congratulate His Excellency Mr. António Guterres on his successful completion of the journey to become the next Secretary-General. His outstanding experience in top positions at both the national and the international levels and his vision of effective multilateralism reassure us of his masterly stewardship of the Organization in the years to come. We rely on his courage and wisdom to make an important and lasting contribution to our common

> "quest for a peaceful, inclusive and sustainably developed world, in which international law and the dignity and worth of the human person are fully pursued",

as he stated in his vision statement of 12 April before the General Assembly.

The selection of Mr. Guterres as Secretary-General is even more important owing to the transparent and inclusive process in which he and the other candidates took part for the first time in the history of the United Nations. We acknowledge the highly professional performance on the part of each candidate, including those from the Eastern European Group.

We further look forward to building upon the success achieved through the ground-breaking work on the revitalization of the General Assembly, as reflected in resolutions 69/321 and 70/305, in terms of strengthening the Assembly's accountability, transparency and institutional memory. We remain committed to exploring ways of further improving the process, including by further promoting gender equality and regional balance in selecting candidates for positions as high-ranking United Nations officials.

The leadership of the Secretary-General will be pivotal as we strive to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and address the question of climate change. His role as the top United Nations diplomat will be crucial in tackling the looming humanitarian crises in the world and in negotiating solutions for countries emerging from conflict, as well as protracted conflicts and sustaining peace.

As the leader serving 7 billion persons around the globe, his determination to foster respect for human rights will be decisive. We fully support the holistic approach of connecting the dots so as to overcome the challenges among the three pillars of the United Nations, namely, peace and security, sustainable development and human rights, by developing policies to further enhance the role and relevance of the United Nations.

We thank the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his tireless work and dedication. The Secretary-General designate, Mr. António Guterres, will be able to count on unsparing support and cooperation on the part of our regional Group.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Chile, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Mr. Barros Melet (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, I have the honour to welcome and extend our warmest congratulations to the newly appointed Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres. His stature and diplomatic competence, together with his broad experience in many areas, make him an eminently suitable person for this demanding key position, at a time when the international community has taken the historical commitment to free the human race from poverty, as set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

His 10-year experience as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has become more relevant than ever, as we face large movements of refugees and migrants, one of our most pressing challenges. We are confident that Mr. Guterres will undertake his role in a manner based on independence and committed leadership, thus instilling the highest standards of integrity within the United Nations system, while promoting unity and understanding in seeking the best global solutions. We are also confident that Mr. Guterres will introduce a renewed impetus for promoting the maintenance of international peace and security.

The Latin American and Caribbean Group looks forward to continuing its close and cooperative relationship with the United Nations in various fields, including development, the Sustainable Developments Goals, climate change, peace and security, decolonization, human rights and democracy.

Our Group extends its appreciation to all of the candidates that participated in the selection process, including in the interactive dialogues with the General Assembly, contributing to the process' transparency and openness. The Group also highlights the role played by the General Assembly in that process, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and resolutions 69/321 and 70/305, and further stresses the need to ensure the implementation of the provisions, inter alia, on the fair and equal distribution of senior posts, based on gender and geographical balance.

Finally, I wish to convey our Group's deepest appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his continuous efforts and contribution to the success of the United Nations, under his decade-long leadership. We look forward to his ongoing leadership until the conclusion of his term.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): On behalf of the Group of Western European and other States, it is an honour and a privilege to address the Assembly as we welcome the appointment of Mr. Antonio Guterres as the next Secretary-General. Today, Mr. Guterres, the former Prime Minister of Portugal and former United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, has been selected to serve as the Head of the Organization. We offer him our warmest congratulations and look forward to working with him from January.

From his first day in office, we pledge to provide our fullest support to Mr. Guterres, and we commit to assisting him in upholding the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. We look to him to manage the Secretariat efficiently and effectively and to advance much-needed reforms so as to enhance the ability of the United Nations to face the challenges of the century, and we express our utmost confidence in his experience, ability and skills to lead this Organization over the coming years.

In doing so, we also express our deep gratitude to the outgoing Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, as he concludes his second term at the end of the year. We applaud his leadership on the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, on human rights and on so many other issues over the past 10 years, and we look to him to continue his vital work until the end of his tenure.

We also pay tribute to the Assembly for the role it has played in improving the selection process. The enhancements set out in resolutions 69/321 and 70/305, in particular, have brought unprecedented transparency, effectiveness and inclusivity to the selection of the Secretary-General. Moreover, we welcome the fact that it was possible to conclude the process quickly, effectively and consensually in the Security Council, enabling a smooth transition for Mr. Guterres as well as sufficient time for him to prepare for his new role. Together, the Assembly has set a new standard for the process and should continue to encourage more transparency and equitability in the future.

In closing, we offer our congratulations again to Mr. Guterres and look forward to his leadership. His tenure comes at a time when the challenges to this Organisation and the multilateral system as a whole are becoming even more complex. Peace and security crises are having significant humanitarian, human rights and development impacts around the world. A strong United Nations is needed more than ever, and today we have chosen a strong Secretary-General to lead it.

It now falls to us, the Member States, to support Mr. Guterres and to cooperate closely with him on decisions that can maintain, strengthen and solidify the role of the United Nations in addressing the greatest global challenges.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the host country.

Ms. Power (United States of America): As the proud host country of the United Nations, the United States joins all the other delegations in this Hall in welcoming the appointment of António Guterres as the next Secretary-General.

Let me start by saying a word about Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who over the past 10 years has shown that progress can be made by setting ambitious goals and mobilizing Member States to meet them. Secretary-General Ban was instrumental in driving the momentum and the concrete commitments necessary to achieve both the historic Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Sustainable Development Goals. They are achievements that — if implemented by Member States — will improve people's lives for decades to

come. The United States is profoundly grateful to Secretary-General Ban for his leadership and his service to our peoples and to our planet.

The selection of António Guterres as the ninth Secretary-General is an extraordinary outcome that matches the world's growing demands for a strong United Nations. It is all the more extraordinary because — let us be honest — all too often at the United Nations, narrow agendas keep us divided and prevent us from taking constructive action. I would like to highlight three ways in which this appointment and the process that gave rise to it exceeded expectations. This should inspire us all going forward.

First, given the well-known divisions in the Security Council, many feared that the Council would fail to reach consensus on the next Secretary-General. I confess that I harboured some of those doubts myself, wondering if I should avoid making Christmas plans with my family in case the process dragged on and I would end up spending Christmas Day on our forty-ninth Security Council straw poll. Others thought — given the polarization of the Council — that we would agree on a recommendation to the General Assembly, but that we would necessarily have to settle for a lowest-common-denominator candidate, someone who would avoid taking stands on the world's most pressing issues.

We have the privilege today of appointing a supremely qualified candidate as Secretary-General, but also one who has a passion for using that office as an independent force to prevent conflict and to alleviate human suffering. The countries of the world — here reflecting, I believe, the longings and the urgent needs of our citizens — are calling on the United Nations, and by extension, the Secretary-General, to do more than this institution has ever done before.

For the United Nations to succeed, we are asking Mr. Guterres to serve as a peacemaker, looking for ways to end the brutal conflicts in places like Syria, Yemen, and South Sudan. We are asking him to serve as a reformer, streamlining the bureaucracy, eliminating redundancies and making sure that peacekeepers are willing and able to protect civilians at risk. And we are asking him to serve as an advocate, rallying the world to respond to humanitarian and man-made catastrophes, and defending the human rights of all people, regardless of their race, creed, nationality, sexual orientation or gender identity. As challenging as those roles may be, we are confident that Mr. Guterres can fill them with distinction.

Secondly, there were fears that the decision-making process for such a critical position would again end up being narrow, exclusive and shrouded in secrecy. Even though fewer people smoke cigarettes in 2016, the image of a few countries huddled in smoke-filled rooms pervaded. But this year, at long last, the process evolved. For the first time, those vying for the job had to defend their visions for a more secure, just and humane future in informal dialogues that the entire world could watch in real time. And those conversations mattered — there is no question that the dialogues in the General Assembly and elsewhere shaped perceptions and informed the thinking of the Council and the broader United Nations membership from the outset. I thank all of the exceptional candidates who participated in that more inclusive, more transparent process, and the United States thanks all Member States that contributed to making that process so much stronger.

Of course, some envisaged that change would look a little different in the end. Hopes were high that this election process would deliver the first-ever woman Secretary-General. As the only woman Permanent Representative serving in the current Security Council and as one of only 37 women Permanent Representatives out of the 193 Permanent Representatives in the Organization, I joined others in encouraging a level playing field for women. And we should consider that until this year, only three women were ever voted upon by the Security Council as candidates — three women over the course of 70 years. This time, seven out of the 13 candidates voted upon by the Security Council were women. So, over twice as many women were considered in 2016 as in all of the previous years together.

While being a woman is not among Mr. Guterres's many qualifications, he has pledged gender parity at all levels of the United Nations, with clear benchmarks and time frames. That builds upon Mr. Guterres's progress towards achieving gender parity in the workplace as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and back when he was the Portuguese Prime Minister.

Thirdly and finally, there was scepticism that we could find in a single candidate a person who could simultaneously get Heads of State on the phone to mobilize coalitions and be a person of the people, someone who really appreciated — indeed, felt — the pain of the vulnerable. And vulnerable people do not

just want the United Nations to do and be better: they need the Organization and for us to be and do better.

In Mr. Guterres, we have selected a candidate who brings both head and heart to the job. Former staff of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have described Mr. Guterres as so impatient to find out the facts of a crisis that he never hesitated to call staff in the field, no matter what their rank or their place in the hierarchy. He always asked how UNHCR headquarters could serve their needs, rather than the other way around. When he saw that UNHCR teams in the field were starved for resources, he shifted funds to help refugees in need, instead of adding jobs in Geneva. And he got out from behind his desk. Mr. Guterres travelled to the refugee camps and witnessed for himself the current crises and the pain and suffering of the displaced, even spending the night in tents in the refugee camps. We have selected a candidate who is prepared to cut past the jargon and the acronyms and the sterile briefings, and get real. He knows that the only measure of our work here is whether we are or are not helping and supporting real people.

In closing, in 1953, the first Secretary-General, Trygve Lie, who was heavily criticized by both the Soviet and the United States Governments, was so frustrated by the limits of his office that his parting advice to his successor was, "Welcome to the most impossible job on this Earth". The job has not grown easier with time, but it has arguably become even more important.

I wish to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Mrs. Ban again for their tireless, tremendous service and for their sacrifice. I thank the Secretary-General designate, Mr. Guterres, for taking on this monumental responsibility. We hope that the unity that we see today can be sustained, the inclusivity and transparency of the process extended and the passion of the Secretary-General-designate and that of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon embodied in the daily work of the Organization. We look forward to a partnership that pays dividends to the people out there who count on us.

The President: I now invite His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, Secretary-General-designate, to make a statement.

Mr. Guterres: When I heard the Security Council's decision to recommend me to the General Assembly, my feelings could be described by just two words: gratitude and humility. It is with the same gratitude and humility that I stand before the Assembly today; those feelings are now joined by a profound sense of responsibility.

I am grateful, first of all, to the General Assembly and the Security Council for entrusting me with the position of Secretary-General of the United Nations in a remarkable demonstration of consensus and unity. I am also grateful for the transparency and openness of the selection process and to the many competent, thoughtful and dedicated candidates who came forward. I believe that the new selection process has meant that the true winner today is the credibility of the United Nations. The process has also made it very clear to me that, having been chosen by all Member States, I must be at the service of them all equally and with no agenda but the one enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

I want to express my deep gratitude for the generous and kind words of the speakers who preceded me, but I must say that I am fully aware of the challenges that the United Nations faces and the limitations surrounding the Secretary-General. The dramatic problems of today's complex world can only inspire a humble approach — one in which the Secretary-General alone neither has all the answers, nor seeks to impose his own views and in which the Secretary-General makes his good offices available, working as a convener, a mediator, a bridge-builder and an honest broker to help find solutions that benefit everyone involved.

Over the past 10 years, I have witnessed at first hand the suffering of the most vulnerable people on Earth. I have visited war zones and refugee camps where one might legitimately ask: what has happened to the dignity and worth of the human person, referred to in the second preambular paragraph of the Charter? What has made us immune to the plight of those who are most socially and economically underprivileged? All of that makes me feel the acute responsibility to make human dignity the core of my work and, I trust, the core of our common work.

It also underscores the importance of gender equality. I have long been aware of the hurdles that women face in society, the family and the workplace just because of their gender. I have witnessed the violence to which they are subjected during conflict or while fleeing violence, just because they are women. I have tried to address that problem through every public office that I have ever held. The protection and empowerment of women and gender parity within the

Organization are and will continue to be a priority commitment for me.

I have faith in the United Nations — a reform-minded United Nations — because I believe in the universal values that it stands for, namely, peace, justice, human dignity, tolerance and solidarity. Based on those values, I believe that diversity in all its forms is a tremendous asset, not a threat, and that in societies that are more and more multi-ethnic, multicultural and multireligious, diversity can bring us together and should not drive us apart. We must make sure that we are able to break the alliance between all those terrorist groups or violent extremists, on one side, and the expressions of populism and xenophobia, on the other. They reinforce one another, and we must be able to fight both of them with determination.

(*spoke in French*)

Without peace, life is devoid of all its meaning. Without peace, we cannot ensure the sustainable development and respect for human rights that, in turn, underpin peace. Unfortunately, peace today is largely lacking in our world.

Because of its global reach and the principles enshrined in the Charter, the United Nations has the moral obligation and universal right to use diplomacy to achieve peace as its primary responsibility. That diplomacy must be able to promote diversity and the representative character of the United Nations; it must facilitate a forum for dialogue in a public space open to all, so that we can learn to work together and better know and listen to one another; and it must be able to ease tensions and arrive at peaceful solutions to conflicts that prevent so many human beings from leading their lives in a manner worthy of that word.

When I studied history in high school — and I must say that I studied with passion — almost all wars ended with victors. But today's conflicts know only losers. Wars seem endless; they are becoming increasingly complex and interconnected, and fuel hatred and terrorism. At the same time, the suffering that they cause is morally intolerable, and security is threatened everywhere. It is our collective responsibility to end that state of affairs.

I am well aware that among us there are various views and sometimes competing legitimate interests that create division and make our unified efforts towards peace difficult. But the threats to our collective security, the nature of our societies and the survival of the planet as we know it are such that our common interest must prevail against all that divides us. Let us unite for the sake of peace. That is the most urgent demand of the citizens of the world that we are here to serve.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

I would like to convey my appreciation for the tireless efforts of the peacekeepers who, deployed far from their homes, defend the principles of the United Nations. I also would like to call on all Member States and structures of the Organization for their support in not allowing repugnant behaviour to damage the reputation of the heroic efforts carried out in the service of the United Nations. It is within the United Nations and under its blue flag that the world can meet together and build peace, with determination, creativity, solidarity and compassion.

(*spoke in English*)

Allow me, before finishing, to salute the Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon. I had the honour of working with him throughout many years and have witnessed his unfailing dedication to the cause of international public service. I will do my utmost to honour Mr. Ban Ki-moon's legacy. What he has achieved, in particular in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, is absolutely remarkable, and I will do my best to support the efforts necessary to fully implement what has been accomplished thus far, thanks to his guidance and leadership.

I also want to express my admiration for the dedication and commitment of the United Nations staff. Having been a staff member for over a decade, I am thrilled with the prospect of becoming a colleague once again.

(*spoke in French*)

The dream of the founders of the United Nations has yet to be fulfilled. Much has been accomplished, but the road ahead remains long. We must embark on that road together, we, the people, in our various roles, because the goal is within reach — the well-being of humankind.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General-designate for his statement, and I request the Chief of Protocol to escort him to room GA-200.

The Secretary-General-designate was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The President: Before proceeding further, I would like to inform members that the oath of office ceremony will take place at a later date, to be announced. I would also like to inform members that the Secretary-General-designate will be in the West Foyer in 10 minutes to receive felicitations.

We have thus concluded our consideration of agenda item 113.

The meeting rose at 11.15 a.m.

United Nations A/71/PV.28

General Assembly

Seventy-first session

Official Records

28th plenary meeting
Friday, 14 October 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Thomson ..... (Fiji)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Tribute to the memory of His Excellency Mr. Girma Asmerom Tesfay, Permanent Representative of Eritrea to the United Nations

The President: It is my sad duty to pay tribute to the memory of the late Permanent Representative of Eritrea to the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. Girma Asmerom Tesfay, who passed away on Wednesday, 5 October. On behalf of the General Assembly, I would like to request the representative of Eritrea, who is present here, to convey our condolences to the Government and the people of Eritrea and to the bereaved family of His Excellency Mr. Girma Asmerom Tesfay. Allow me to say a few remarks.

This morning we are honouring the memory of our dear friend and colleague, Ambassador Girma Asmerom Tesfay of Eritrea. Many here today knew Ambassador Tesfay personally, and the news of his sudden death has been met with deep sadness. In life, Ambassador Tesfay made a significant contribution to the United Nations, and many colleagues recall fondly his enthusiastic participation, on behalf of his nation, at the signing ceremony for the Paris Agreement on Climate Change here in this very Hall in April.

Beyond the United Nations, Ambassador Tesfay was a distinguished diplomat who served his country in a wide range of places, including as Permanent Representative to the African Union and Ambassador to Belgium, Canada, Ethiopia, the European Union, South Africa and the United States. He was a calm, eloquent and charismatic individual and an extremely accomplished athlete.

On behalf of the General Assembly, I would like to extend to Ambassador Tesfay's family and loved ones, and to the Government and the people of Eritrea, our heartfelt condolences. If I may also add a personal note – like many here today, I have lost a dear friend with his passing. May Girma's soul rest in peace.

I now invite representatives to stand and observe a minute of silence in tribute to the memory of His Excellency Mr. Girma Asmerom Tesfay.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silence.

The President: I now give the floor to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General: I join the General Assembly in conveying my deep sorrow at the loss of His Excellency Mr. Girma Asmerom Tesfay, who passed away on 5 October in New York. I express my deep personal condolences, as well as the condolences of the United Nations system, to his family, to His Excellency Mr. Isaias Afwerki, President of the State of Eritrea, and to the Eritrean people.

Ambassador Girma presented his credentials as Permanent Representative of the State of Eritrea to the United Nations on 23 April 2014. He was one of his country's highest-ranking diplomats. Over the course of his career, he served as Ambassador to the African Union, the European Union, Luxembourg, South Africa and the United States. A masterful diplomat and

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negotiator, he showed real dedication to intensifying the engagement of the United Nations with his country, which resulted in greater cooperation between the United Nations Secretariat, United Nations funds and programmes and the authorities in Eritrea.

Throughout his life, he was a great promoter of multilateralism. I very much appreciated his insights and discussions with me and my colleagues in the broader United Nations system. His dedication to his country was always apparent but perhaps, most movingly, was symbolized by his unselfish work until the very last day of his life.

Once again, on behalf of the United Nations, I express our sadness as well as our commitment to continue working with the Government and the people of Eritrea to advance together across all three pillars of our work – peace, development and human rights.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Niger, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Wafy (Niger): It is with a very deep sense of bereavement that I stand here today on behalf of my colleagues of the African Group to say a few words on the very painful loss we all suffered when Ambassador Girma left us. It is so difficult to accept and come to terms with the fact that such a vivacious person would leave us without warning, although some of us, his friends, could see that lately he was somehow not exactly the old Girma we knew. Nevertheless, we had hoped that he would rediscover his zest for life.

There was one aspect to him that was always there and never changed despite his condition – his total dedication to his work and to defending the interests of his country. Ambassador Girma was a very famous soccer star when he was young. He subsequently became a freedom fighter, soon after finishing his graduate studies here in the United States. He was a student here in New York and he passed away in New York.

The African Group misses Ambassador Girma very much. All of us, including myself, considered Girma as a friend, with whom we laughed and with whom we carried out many important tasks. There is no doubt that the Africa Group lost one of its most dedicated diplomats, in whom we had great confidence for doing what is best for the Africa Group and Africa. I also believe that the United Nations has lost a good man, a person who knew the value of the Organization.

In the light of the foregoing, we consider the passing of Girma to be a great loss for the United Nations. I would like, on behalf of the African Group and on my own behalf, to express our most sincere condolences to the people and the Government of Eritrea and to Girma's family. May his soul rest in perfect peace.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Georgia, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Mr. Imnadze (Georgia): It is with great sadness that we learned of the untimely passing of our dear colleague and friend, the Permanent Representative of Eritrea, Mr. Girma Asmerom Tesfay. On behalf of the members of the Group of Eastern European States, I would like to express our deepest condolences to the family and friends of Ambassador Tesfay as well as to the Government and the people of Eritrea.

Ambassador Girma was a devoted professional, a seasoned and widely respected diplomat who served his country for decades and a distinguished member of the diplomatic community at the United Nations. Over the course of his career, he spared no effort in representing his nation in a time of dramatic political transformation for Eritrea and the region. He leaves behind a legacy of diplomatic service as the Ambassador of Eritrea to the European Union, the African Union, the United States, Canada and the Republic of South Africa, his efforts to contribute to the respect of international law, peace and justice will be cherished.

Ambassador Tesfay successfully served as a Vice-President of the General Assembly and, on behalf of the African Group, led negotiations on the issue of addressing large movements of refugees and migrants. We also remember him as a great soccer player at home and at the United Nations diplomatic tournaments.

Ambassador Tesfay's untimely death is an irreparable loss for his country. Among us, his friends and colleagues, he will be greatly missed and dearly remembered.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Mr. Hickey (United Kingdom): On behalf of the Group of Western European and other States, it is with great sadness that I address the General Assembly as we gather to remember Ambassador Girma Asmerom Tesfay, Permanent Representative of Eritrea. As others have said before, our thoughts are with Ambassador Girma's family as well as with the Government and the people of Eritrea. His passing is a sad loss to our community here in New York and to those of us who knew Ambassador Girma. We will recall the warmth and skill with which he led the Mission of Eritrea at the United Nations. Ambassador Girma's sad death represents the personal loss of a friend, colleague and leader, but it is also a deep loss for Eritrea.

Many people here might have served with him in Addis Ababa, where he was Eritrea's Ambassador to the African Union and also to Ethiopia, or in Brussels, where he served as Ambassador to the European Union. Some may know him from when he served as Ambassador to the United States and Canada or as Ambassador to South Africa. There are few of us here today with such an impressive résumé, and our respect for Ambassador Girma's career and work is as deep as our sadness in meeting here to mark his loss.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Kuwait, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait): On 5 October, we sadly learned of the passing of one of our dear colleagues, Ambassador Girma Asmerom Tesfay of the State of Eritrea. On behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group at the United Nations, I would like to extend to the people and the Government of Eritrea, as well as to the family of Ambassador Tesfay, our heartfelt condolences and deepest sympathies on his untimely passing.

As one of our colleagues, Ambassador Tesfay came with an impressive background and a wealth of experience from his many years of diplomacy. His experience working as the Ambassador of Eritrea to the European Union and the African Union showed his dedication to diplomacy and multilateralism. He fought for his nation's freedom and he was incredibly devoted to the success of his country. On behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group, let me once again convey my sincerest condolences to Ambassador Tesfay's family and to the Government and the people of Eritrea.

We, the Asia-Pacific Group, would like to express our support and solidarity with the members of the Permanent Mission of Eritrea as they overcome the great loss of their colleague and ambassador. Throughout the halls of the United Nations he will be remembered as a remarkable diplomat and true friend who will be dearly missed. May God rest his soul in eternal peace.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the host country.

Mr. McCulley (United States of America): I have the honour today of speaking on behalf of the Government of the United States, the country that has the privilege of hosting the United Nations. I offer our deepest condolences to the people of Eritrea, and particularly to the family and friends of Ambassador Girma Asmerom Tesfay.

The diplomatic life takes one far from home, often for years or even decades at a time. Ambassador Girma served his people as Ambassador to the United States from 2001 to 2006, and since 2014 as their representative to the United Nations. As others have noted, he has also served as Ambassador to the African Union and the European Union. He leaves behind friends, family and the Mission he led. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family and friends.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Eritrea.

Mr. Gebreab (Eritrea): Allow me first to extend the deep appreciation of the people and the Government of Eritrea to you, Mr. President, for having organized this important event to pay tribute to the memory of one of Eritrea's finest sons, Ambassador Girma Asmerom Tesfay, who passed away last week after battling cancer for several months. I would like to thank everyone who took the floor to honour and remember a colleague and friend who was close to many in this Hall.

We are very grateful and touched by everyone's presence here today at the General Assembly to pay homage to Girma Asmerom Tesfay. We welcome the words of sympathy and support that have been expressed in person or through phone calls, in visits to our Mission to sign the book of condolences, and the sending of cards and messages via social media. It is indeed heartening and, we believe, befitting a person who never failed to display warmth and friendship in his interactions with members of the United Nations family.

For his entire adult life, Ambassador Girma was a dedicated, tireless, passionate and accomplished fighter for the rights of the Eritrean people. Beginning

in his student days here in the United States, through his years as a freedom fighter and upon his last living breath as Eritrea's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Girma had an unwavering faith in the Eritrean people and country, which he served with distinction. He was a champion, not only of the cause of Eritrea, but for fairness and justice for all. His sharp mind, quick wit, diplomatic savvy and selfless service were an invaluable contribution that will fondly be remembered.

In his diplomatic work at the United Nations, Girma interacted with all members, including with members of delegations with which he did not agree. He did not see barriers; rather he saw opportunities to engage, and engage he did with all to promote an inclusive peace for his country and the region. He was relentless in his endeavours and in articulating the positions and policies of his Government. He stressed the need for fairness and justice and for the equality of States and fought against the double-standard in all its forms.

In all his conversations, Girma kept in mind the importance of respecting the sovereignty of nations, the need to lift unjustified sanctions on developing countries and the non-politicization of human rights. He furthered cooperation among Member States and the United Nations system to promote these objectives. All the accolades and eulogies that have come from his friends and colleagues portray a masterful person with exceptional qualities of compassion, valour, selflessness, personal integrity, hard work and extraordinary resilience. Yet these descriptions, though apt, do not convey the full stature of Ambassador Girma.

His exceptional resilience is perhaps better captured in the dignified manner with which he fought the cruel illness that afflicted him over the past six months. Girma never voiced a single complaint, nor did he take a day off from his duties, in spite of his debilitating and malignant disease. Indeed, one of his last diplomatic functions was — in the middle of his treatment — to communicate from Asmara with and to respond to the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea again in defence against unjustified accusations lodged against his nation.

Ambassador Girma was a national hero who devoted 45 years of his life to defending freedom and national dignity. His was a life well lived. His passing is of course a great and permanent loss for Eritrea. For me personally, he was a comrade in arms, a close friend and an associate. We worked together with the Eritreans for Liberation in North America association in the United States and joined the Eritrean People's Liberation Front, the liberation movement that led Eritrea's war of independence, on the very same day. During the struggle for independence, we worked in the same department.

I only wish he had lived to see the redress of the injustices directed against his country, injustices he fought against with utter conviction, boundless determination and consummate confidence but always with an unfailing sense of humour. The struggle continues, and, as we in Eritrea say, "The victory of the people is assured".

The President: If the Assembly would permit me, I would like to make a short statement at this juncture to the representative of Eritrea. Having been lost in thought on the passing of our friend, I failed to thank him for his very moving statement. I wish to thank him for it now.

Agenda items 62 and 12

New Partnership for Africa's Development: progress in implementation and international support

(a) New Partnership for Africa's Development: progress in implementation and international support

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/71/189 and A/71/203)

(b) Causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General (A/71/211)

2001-2010: Decade to Roll Back Malaria in Developing Countries, Particularly in Africa

The President: Throughout this year's Africa Week, we have joined in celebrating Africa's progress in sustainable development, human rights and the promotion of sustainable peace and security on the continent. We have also discussed how the international community can help to address persistent challenges so that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, along with the African Union Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, can all be realized.

Fundamental to these discussions has been a focus on stronger strategic and operational partnerships. In this context, it is imperative that we consider the pre-eminent and long-standing framework for development in Africa, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

As a comprehensive, integrated and strategic framework for socioeconomic development in Africa, NEPAD aims to promote Africa-wide policies for growth by addressing priority areas, including macroeconomic policy, conflict prevention and resolution, the promotion of democracy and human rights, infrastructure and agricultural development, strengthening regulatory frameworks, the provision of education and training, and empowering women and girls. The critical need for all stakeholders to take a coordinated approach to sustainable development is paramount.

I commend the African Union's decision to align its Agenda 2063 with the 2030 Agenda. The efforts of so many African countries to begin structuring their national development frameworks around the provisions of the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Agenda 2063 deserve particular commendation. In this regard, it is also encouraging that, as part of the ongoing efforts to implement the objectives of NEPAD within Africa, the NEPAD agency has been tasked with the fast-tracking implementation and monitoring of major Africa-wide development programmes and frameworks, including the Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In the 15 years since the adoption of NEPAD, Africa has experienced unprecedented economic growth and progress in building major infrastructure, strengthening regional and national health systems, improving gender mainstreaming and working towards climate mitigation and adaptation in agriculture. While Africa's growth remains strong, unfavourable global economic conditions, including in trade and financing, volatile commodity prices, limited economic diversification and high levels of debt risk undermining hard-fought development gains. Tackling these challenges will require the sustained efforts of African countries and development partners alike, including the United Nations system, to strengthen capacity-building and increase investment in infrastructure, health services, regulatory reform, agricultural productivity and access to education.

The efforts by African countries to pursue a continental free trade area to strengthen intra-African trade and economic integration is well worth pursuing. So too is enhanced international support to African countries for debt relief and sustainability, foreign direct investment and, to combat illicit capital flows, access to international markets and technology transfer. South-South cooperation, as a complement to North-South and triangular cooperation, also remains an important tool for boosting economic growth and integration among African countries and should be enhanced.

One of the primary objectives of NEPAD is the empowerment of women and girls so that their full potential in political and economic life may be unlocked. In this regard, I commend the African Union's decision to declare 2015 the Year of Women's Empowerment and Development and 2016 the African Year of Human Rights with Particular Focus on the Rights of Women. However, despite these and other initiatives, numerous challenges continue to hinder progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment in Africa, which is in turn impeding overall development and economic outcomes. In sub-Saharan Africa, gender inequality is estimated to be costing $95 billion per year. Specific programmes that strengthen gender equality and women's empowerment, promote their access to education and training and pursue the full realization of their rights should therefore be given priority as part of comprehensive efforts to drive sustainable development.

The United Nations has been a steadfast partner in Africa's efforts to achieve sustainable peace and development. I congratulate the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa for its work in coordinating United Nations system-wide support for NEPAD and the broader 2030 Agenda. Its work includes raising awareness of Africa's development needs and advocating for stronger partnerships to complement national and regional development efforts, including with civil society and the private sector.

The urgent need to strengthen global efforts to implement the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda is why we have made the principal objective of the seventy-first session of the General Assembly the drive for a universal push in implementing all 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Through our SDG Implementation Strategy, we will be pushing implementation by providing sustained engagement to previously mandated SDG events and processes, including the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable

Urban Development, in Quito next week, for which I leave tomorrow; the twenty-second Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Marrakech, which I will be attending in November; and, of course, the High-Level United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 in New York, in the first week of June 2017. We will be supporting existing efforts within and outside of the United Nations system to drive strategic partnerships, a track which complements NEPAD's overarching goals and framework.

Finally, we will be backing a series of signature events that will lay the foundation for sustained implementation in key areas, including global awareness of the SDGs, particularly among young people, which will help to promote the development and engagement of young people, which in Africa will help to harness the demographic dividend. I will also be pushing opportunities to secure better financing for sustainable development, promote sustainable peace, empower women and girls, tackle poverty and inequality and advance protection of our oceans, environment and planet.

I would also like to take this opportunity to address our global efforts to combat malaria, particularly in Africa. In the five years since the start of the Global Decade to Roll Back Malaria, the World Health Organization estimates that up to 3.2 billion people — nearly half of the world's population — remain at risk of contracting malaria. As it is a preventable and treatable mosquito-borne disease, it is critical that we intensify our efforts to combat it. In this regard, I commend the decision of African countries to extend, from 2016 to 2020, the African Union Road Map on Shared Responsibility and Global Solidarity for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria Response in Africa.

As we embark upon a new and ambitious chapter of implementing the sustainable development framework, let us all join forces to reinvigorate our commitment to real partnerships that will fully realize the goals of NEPAD in Africa, eradicate malaria once and for all, and achieve each and every one of the Sustainable Development Goals by the year 2030.

Mr. Plasai (Thailand): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and would like to thank the Secretary-General for his reports on the items we are discussing today (A/71/189, A/71/203 and A/71/211).

First of all, the Group of 77 and China would like to commend African leaders for their remarkable efforts and enduring commitment in the pursuit of Africa's regional development. The African Union's Agenda 2063 and its first 10-year implementation plan demonstrate the region's shared vision for peace and development and the actions it is taking towards fulfilling that vision.

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015 has underscored the shared commitment of the international community to working tirelessly to eradicate poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, and to achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions, namely, economic, social and environmental, in a balanced and integrated manner. While African countries continue to implement their New Partnership for Africa's Development priorities in the context of Agenda 2063, the Group has recognized the complementarities between Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In this regard, it is crucial that we continue to mobilize international support for the implementation of those Agendas in order to achieve greater synergies between the regional and international development frameworks.

In a time of unfavourable global economic conditions and increasing environmental challenges, African countries are among the most severely affected. Unless they have access to adequate and predictable resources for development, their attempts to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly to address the issues of poverty and hunger, will continue to be undermined. In this regard, there is a need for a revitalized global partnership for Africa if we are to mobilize the means and resources to support the implementation of SDGs in the region, including but not limited to financing, trade, debt relief and transfer of environmentally sound technologies.

The Group re-emphasizes the critical role of official development assistance (ODA) and foreign direct investment (FDI), which remain major sources of financing and development in Africa. The Group is deeply concerned about the fact that both ODA and FDI to Africa have declined in recent years. The Group therefore would like to reiterate that the fulfilment of our ODA commitments remains crucial, including the

commitment by many developed countries to achieve directed the ODA target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income to developing countries and directed the ODA target of 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of gross national income to the least developed countries. We urge those who have not fulfilled their commitments to step up efforts towards the ODA targets.

It is highly commendable that Africa's ratio of public debt to gross domestic product is lower today than it has been in decades. The Group believes that Africa's global development partners could provide the assistance needed by African countries to attain long-term debt sustainability. The Group would like to reiterate that North-South cooperation still lies at the core of the global partnership that drives Africa's development, but it is also complemented by South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation.

The Group of 77 and China is concerned at Africa's disproportionately low share in the volume of international trade, which stands at approximately 3.3 per cent. We reiterate the need for all countries and relevant multilateral institutions to continue to make efforts to enhance coherence in their trade policies towards African countries and to strengthen the efforts made to fully integrate African countries into the international trading system. It is also necessary to build their capacity to compete through such initiatives as Aid for Trade and assistance for addressing the adjustment challenges posed by trade liberalization.

Africa has had little experience with industrialization, with the result that it is facing numerous challenges in implementing the structural changes needed to revive the economy. Despite the fact that the General Assembly adopted the First and Second Industrial Development Decades for Africa, for the periods from 1980 to 1989 and from 1991 to 2000, respectively, to support Africa's efforts to overcome the challenges of industrialization, limited progress was made due to the lack of resources and capacities and for geostrategic reasons. The Group of 77 and China therefore strongly supports the General Assembly's recent adoption of the Third Industrial Development Decade for Africa for the period 2016-2025, which could address the ways and means to ensure inclusive and sustainable industrialization as an engine for growth and provide another form of strategic leverage in support of the efforts of African countries.

The Group of 77 and China welcomes the Group of 20 (G-20) Action Plan on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the G-20 Initiative on Supporting Industrialization in Africa and Least Developed Countries, launched at the eleventh G-20 summit, held in Hangzhou, China, on 4 and 5 September, and looks forward to their implementation.

(*spoke in French*)

The Group of 77 and China welcomed the decision of the African Union to proclaim this year the African Year of Human Rights with Particular Focus on the Rights of Women. This underscores the African Union's acknowledgment of the importance of women and girls and of human development in general as the pillar and main vectors for the implementation of its Agenda 2063. It also corresponds to SDG 5, which emphasizes the essential role of women in the path towards sustainable development.

The Group of 77 and China recognizes the positive trends towards a lasting peace in Africa and also wishes to emphasize the need to create conditions conducive to sustainable peace. In this regard, there is always an urgent need to develop and strengthen human and institutional capacity, especially in countries emerging from conflict.

Besides the traditional threats to peace and security in Africa, newly emerging challenges — particularly that of terrorism — require continued international support. The Group of 77 and China therefore stresses the need for the United Nations system to support regional and subregional African organizations in their implementation of action plans against terrorism. On this issue, we are convinced of the crucial importance of the commitment of Member States to support African countries in achieving the objective of an Africa free of conflicts and to ending all wars in Africa by 2020.

Finally, the Group of 77 and China welcomes the role of the international community in the progress made in the fight against and prevention of malaria. According to the World Health Organization *2015 World Malaria Report*, the rate of incidence of malaria cases dropped by 42 per cent in Africa between 2000 and 2015. However, the majority of global malaria cases are in Africa. We welcome the World Health Organization Global Technical Strategy for Malaria 2016–2030 as a framework for continuing global efforts against the disease. We believe that increased international support

for the implementation of this framework will enable Africa to achieve its goals of eliminating malaria.

We also wish to reiterate the need for the United Nations system to provide assistance in the improvement of health-care systems and to ensure equal access to health care. This is because the health and well-being of the population are at the heart of inclusive and sustainable development.

Mr. Wafy (Niger): I have the honour to address the General Assembly on behalf of the Group of African States in today's important debate on the agenda items related to Africa. At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important debate and for your opening remarks.

I also wish to thank the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his analytical and well-documented reports submitted under these agenda items, namely, the New Partnership for Africa's Development: fourteenth consolidated progress report on implementation and international support (A/71/189), the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/71/211), and the biennial report on the review of the implementation of the commitments made towards Africa's development (A/71/203). I also commend the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, under the leadership of Under-Secretary-General Maged Abdelaziz, for preparing these reports.

Over the past year, African countries continued to make progress on the priority areas set forth in the New Partnership for Africa's Development. This is most evident in the implementation of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa. Improvement in project preparation and leveraging finance, including from the private sector and multilateral development banks, particularly the African Development Bank, have advanced the implementation of many of the projects approved in the 2014 Dakar Financing Summit for Africa's Infrastructure. The progress made on infrastructure development has contributed to boosting connectivity and enhancing regional integration, thereby building on the momentum created by the establishment of the Tripartite Free Trade Area by States members of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, the East African Community and the Southern African Development Community, and on the launch of the flagship projects in the First 10-Year Implementation Plan (2014-2023), under Agenda 2063, including the African passport and free movement of peoples.

Similarly, other priority sectors, including agriculture, food security, education, training and health have seen varying degrees of progress. In particular, with respect to agricultural development, 50 African countries are now engaged in the implementation of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme, with 12 countries so far surpassing the target of allocating 10 per cent of their national budgets to agricultural development. However, these efforts are taking place despite the precariousness of current global economic conditions. The subdued demand for raw commodities, particularly from emerging economies, along with falling oil and other primary-commodity prices, has had a profoundly negative impact on Africa's total exports, which have declined by almost 30 per cent. In addition, there has been a decline of 7 per cent in foreign direct investment flows, thus affecting the growth rates and social expenditures of most African countries.

The foregoing conditions speak to the urgency of making progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063 and its First 10-Year Implementation Plan (2014-2023). Indeed, the global and continental agendas place strong emphasis on regional integration, structural economic transformation and enhancing productive capacity, industrialization and agribusiness in order to further expand opportunities for economic participation, including for women and young people, and to create an enabling environment for poverty eradication and socioeconomic transformation.

In that regard, Africa attaches great importance to promoting synergies, building complementarities and ensuring a coherent and integrated implementation of the African Union's Agenda 2063, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. That is why Africa has embarked on an important process to incorporate the goals and targets of those global and continental frameworks to national and regional development plans.

In addition, a solid structure for rigorous follow-up and review at the national, regional and continental levels was established. This structure recognized both the importance of multi-stakeholder dialogue at the local and national levels and the critical role of the

Regional Economic Communities in advancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, including by promoting peer learning and sharing experiences. International support for these endeavours is more urgent than ever, particularly for strengthening the capacities of data systems to track progress and identify implementation gaps. The African Group believes that the United Nations monitoring mechanism can provide important input to this structure as well as to the follow-up and review structures at the global level, including the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

Our greatest challenge in achieving a people-centred vision of development agendas and realizing their promise of leaving no one behind is the mobilization of adequate means for their implementation. A revitalized global partnership for development is therefore an indispensable ingredient to success. In this regard, I wish to commend the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa for his analytical and advocacy work to promote Africa's development priorities and for making effective partnerships the thematic focus of Africa Week 2016.

Indeed, Africa's strategic partnerships with traditional, new and emerging partners and with the United Nations system must be streamlined and adjusted to avoid the shortcomings of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and support the broader vision of the 2030 Agenda. These partnerships must be aligned to Africa's development priorities identified in the African Union Agenda 2063 and address the gap in the implementation of commitments made towards Africa's development. The biennial report on the review of the implementation of the commitments made towards Africa's development gives us a clear picture of the implementation gap that is threatening the fulfilment of the commitments pertaining to the four thematic topics, namely, infrastructure development, trade, a conflict-free Africa, and gender equality and women's empowerment.

While recognizing the efforts of the African countries and their development partners in fulfilling their commitments in those thematic areas, much more needs to be done on the basis of the principles of partnership and mutual accountability. Official development assistance and other commitments in the areas of finance, technology transfer, capacity-building and market access must be fulfilled in a timely manner. Commitments made to the Green Climate Fund must also be honoured so as to help African countries build resilience in the face of the devastating effects of climate change.

The African Group welcomes the report of the Secretary-General entitled, "Causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa", which provides a succinct overview of recent major peace and security developments on the continent, and which highlights, in particular, the place of women's human rights in peace and security in Africa. The African Group takes note, with appreciation, of the progress made in preventing and resolving conflict in Africa and in building and consolidating peace in countries emerging from conflict, which collectively support achieving the goals set forth in the African initiative Silencing the Guns, Owning the Future by 2020.

In particular, Africa has also made significant progress in strengthening its institutional capacity, including its ability to undertake peace efforts and promote good governance, including through the African Peer Review Mechanism. The decision of African leaders at the twenty-seventh African Union (AU) Summit, held in Kigali, to set up an import levy to help fund the budget of the African Union, including 25 per cent of the budget of its peace and security activities, is a historic step towards full self-reliance and a sign of Africa's strong commitment to realizing the Africa We Want as detailed in the Agenda 2063. The revitalization of the African Peer Review Mechanism will provide a further boost to African efforts to prevent conflict through addressing the root causes and drivers of conflict.

At the same time, Africa continues to face serious challenges to its peace and security, including electoral violence, social and economic inequality and exclusion, especially of women and young people, and the rise of violent extremism and terrorism. African countries have taken numerous steps to address these challenges at national and regional levels, including, in the case of terrorism, the deployment of the African Union Mission in Somalia and the Multinational Joint Task Force, to combat Al-Shabaab and Boko Haram, respectively.

To complement and strengthen African efforts to address challenges to the continent's peace and security, it is critical that Africa's partners enhance their support for African peace and security activities and help build the continent's own capacity to prevent and resolve conflict through increased assistance for

the African Peace and Security Architecture and the African Governance Architecture.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the AU's Agenda 2063 provide us with unique and complementary blueprints to tackle conflicts in a holistic manner by integrating development, peace, security and human rights into one actionable framework. No country or organization can hope to meet these challenges alone. In recognition of this fact, the African Union and the United Nations have sought to strengthen their cooperation across the areas of peace, security, human rights and development. That is reflected in the Framework for a Renewed United Nations/AU Partnership on Africa's Integration and Development Agendas 2017-2027, adopted at the twenty-fifth African Union summit, held in Johannesburg in June 2015, and in the preparation of the Joint United Nations-AU Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security.

Furthermore, we must also strive to enhance the collaboration between the United Nations and Africa in every area of conflict-prevention and resolution, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction and development, as well as the promotion of good governance, the rule of law and respect for human rights. In that regard, we should draw on the recommendations of the major United Nations reviews undertaken in 2015 of its peace operations and peacebuilding architecture and of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), including the need for fostering closer and more effective partnerships with regional organizations, particularly the African Union.

Lastly, with regard to making progress on implementing the aims of the Decade to Roll Back Malaria in Developing Countries, Particularly in Africa, the African Group welcomes the commitment shown by world leaders under Sustainable Development Goal 3 to continue to work to eradicate malaria and other diseases. We underscore the importance of taking preventive measures, including the improvement of surveillance and reporting within the framework of the overall objective of strengthening the capacities of African countries' health systems to tackle malaria and other health issues.

Mr. Ten-Pow (Guyana): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 14 States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) in today's joint debate on the agenda items "New Partnership for Africa's Development: progress in implementation and international support" and on "2001-2010: Decade to Roll Back Malaria in Developing Countries, Particularly in Africa". We thank the Secretary-General for his insightful reports, contained in documents A/71/189 and A/71/203, which provide a comprehensive overview of what has been achieved to date, as well as the challenges encountered and the work that remains to be done.

CARICOM would like to express its support once again for the African-led and African-owned approach to socioeconomic revival that the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) represents. We note with satisfaction the progress that has been achieved in recent years, while recognizing that there are still many hurdles to be overcome before the goals set can be fully achieved. NEPAD has enabled Africans to chart their own course towards higher standards of living, surmount the ravages of conflict and poverty, and fulfil the rich promise of their boundless potential; the progress made thus far illustrates its effectiveness as a development model for Africa.

It is especially encouraging to learn that, despite the difficult global economic environment in 2015, the international community has continued to support NEPAD's implementation through financing, trade, debt relief and South-South cooperation. Indeed, the progress made in the areas of infrastructure development, trade, a conflict-free Africa, gender equality and women's empowerment is testimony to NEPAD's viability and provides strong justification for its continued international support. The initiatives being undertaken through NEPAD coincide with the objectives of the International Decade for People of African Descent, which is being observed from 2015 to 2024, in that it is a vehicle for taking effective measures to implement a programme of activities in a spirit of recognition, justice and development for people of African descent.

Earlier this week, we observed the International Day of the Girl Child, again highlighting the ambition for gender equality embodied in the Sustainable Development Goals. It was a solemn reminder that girls still face widespread disadvantages and discrimination on a daily basis. Against that backdrop, it is heartening to note in the Secretary-General's report that, where gender equality and women's empowerment are concerned, major legislative reforms have achieved

significant results in education, health and political participation. The report also indicates, however, that challenges remain for women in the areas of economic empowerment and human rights violations, as well as in gender disparities, violence against women and women's inadequate participation in peace processes. We urge that more aggressive action be taken in those critical areas.

On the health front, CARICOM is encouraged by the progress of recent years in the fight against malaria. The African Union reported on World Malaria Day 2016 that a good number of African countries had met the targets for ending malaria set in the Millennium Development Goals and that Africa had accounted for 60 per cent of the global drop in malaria-related deaths, with 6.2 million lives saved since 2000. CARICOM calls on the international community to renew its commitment to supporting Africa and other affected regions in fighting that preventable disease. We endorse the Secretary-General's assessment that building sustainable health systems capable of meeting current and future threats, such as that of Ebola, is key to ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all Africans.

Climate change remains a major threat to sustainable development in Africa, given the continent's vulnerability to environmental and climatic events. Against the backdrop of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other global frameworks, including the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the African Union's Agenda 2063, CARICOM urges African countries and their development partners to heed the Secretary-General's call to work towards incorporating those mainstream agendas into their national development frameworks, as their effective implementation will help to realize NEPAD's priorities.

The Secretary-General's report identifies two major challenges to realizing NEPAD's objectives — first, a lack of adequate financial support, and secondly, the severe institutional and technical capacity constraints, at the country level, in the African Union and in the regional economic communities, that prevent effective implementation in all four of NEPAD's thematic areas. CARICOM is of the view that the significant improvements that are being recorded in the areas to which adequate resources have been channelled justify the provision of further support. We agree with the Secretary-General's assessment that the full realization of the Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the aspirations of the African Union's Agenda 2063 will require concerted efforts by both African countries and the international community.

A supportive international environment is critical to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in Africa, including through official development assistance, foreign direct investment, trade and debt relief, and in that regard, as I said, we are pleased to note that the international community's support has continued. We join with the Secretary-General in urging African countries, together with their development partners, to continue to take measures to strengthen the basis for growth while promoting social policies aimed at addressing poverty and inequality, in line with the 2030 Agenda's vision of ensuring that no one is left behind.

CARICOM also supports the call made at the 2015 African Union Summit in Johannesburg for the United Nations to further enhance its cooperation with the African Union, especially in the context of implementing the African Union's Agenda 2063.

Mr. Doualeh (Djibouti), Vice-President, took the Chair.

CARICOM reaffirms its commitment to continued collaboration with Africa in addressing common challenges to peace and development and in contributing together to a more prosperous and secure world. Our close interaction and collaboration within the United Nations and under the mechanisms of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States have helped to ensure a constant renewal of the fraternal bonds between our peoples and regions. We look forward to strengthening those ties even further in the years ahead. In that connection, I am pleased to report that CARICOM's decades-long relationship with Africa is being consolidated through a strengthened diplomatic presence in Africa, increased people-to-people ties and the pursuit of economic and technical cooperation for our mutual benefit.

In conclusion, the States members of the Caribbean Community would like to take this opportunity to express their renewed confidence in the prospects for Africa's continued progress and to reiterate our commitment to a strong partnership with Africa for the mutual benefit of our two fraternal regions.

Mr. Ismail (Brunei Darussalam): Before delivering my statement, I would like to express our deepest condolences and sympathies to our Thai colleagues on the passing yesterday of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand. Our thoughts and prayers are with the Government and the people of the Kingdom of Thailand on this very sad day. I would also like to express our sorrow on the passing of our dear friend and colleague Ambassador Girma Tesfay, Permanent Representative of Eritrea.

I have the honour to deliver this statement on agenda item 62 on behalf of the 10 States members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) — Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam, as well as my own country, Brunei Darussalam.

ASEAN aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the representative of Thailand on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

We would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive reports (A/71/189, A/71/203 and A/71/211), which have provided us with valuable updates and practical recommendations on the way forward for Africa's development. We are encouraged by the fact that Africa continues to make economic strides, despite the slowdown in the global economy and the low commodity prices that have lowered growth projections for the continent. The signing in 2015 of an agreement on the Tripartite Free Trade Area has paved the way to an agreement on a continental free-trade area by 2017, which would boost intra-African trade and provide for more economic opportunities with the rest of the world.

As we work towards ASEAN's Community Vision 2025, there are many areas where ASEAN and Africa could cooperate so as to realize our shared aspirations for the development and future of our regions. Six decades after the Bandung Conference was held in 1955, its spirit continues to guide us in addressing issues of common concern on a basis of mutual respect and trust, in accordance with the relevant principles of the Charter of the United Nations. I would therefore like to express ASEAN's support for full and effective implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which will also provide a strong foundation for the Africa Union's Agenda 2063.

We note the good progress that many of the African Member States have made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. As we embark on our journey to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it is vital that we continue to work together to collectively reach those global goals. In that regard, ASEAN continues to encourage NEPAD's efforts to prioritize health, education and gender mainstreaming on their agenda. We also welcome the valuable contribution of the African Peer Review Mechanism to strengthening engagement between Governments and their peoples.

We realize that it is difficult to achieve progress and development without durable peace. The growing threats of terrorism and violent extremism and the existence of protracted armed conflicts stunt development. That is why we continue to have faith in NEPAD's programmes, particularly those aimed at developing human capital in order to promote peace, security and prosperity.

In conclusion, ASEAN would like to reiterate its solidarity with and support for the endeavours of our African friends and the international community to achieve greater progress in implementing the NEPAD agenda for the benefit of Africa.

Mr. McCulley (United States of America): President Obama spoke of the centrality of Africa during a speech on 24 September to the United States-Africa Business Forum. He said that with so many of the key challenges we face — our security, our prosperity, climate change, the struggle for human rights and human dignity and the reduction of conflict — Africa is essential to our progress.

Africa's rise is important not just to Africa but to the entire world. That is why the United States appreciates the holistic, comprehensive and integrated approach to sustainable development that the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) represents. NEPAD's four programmes of work articulate a clear and compelling plan of action for sustainable development in Africa, covering as it does natural resources, governance and food security; regional integration, infrastructure and trade; industrialization, science, technology and innovation; and human capital development, youth employment and women's empowerment.

We are proud supporters of NEPAD's vision, and many of the foreign assistance programmes and partnerships of the United States are providing

concrete assistance in Africa that helps to advance all of NEPAD's work programmes. For example, our Feed the Future programme focuses on increasing crop yields, which in turn result in higher incomes, improved nutrition, enhanced food security and stronger economies. In 2015 alone, Feed the Future helped more than 3.6 million African farmers gain access to new tools and technologies, such as high-yield crops and seeds, fertilizer application tools and best practices in soil conservation and water management. Those and other efforts helped farmers supported by Feed the Future realize more than $450 million in new agricultural sales that same year.

In the area of energy security, our Power Africa programme is mobilizing billions of dollars in investment from Government and businesses in order to reduce the number of Africans living without electricity. Power Africa's 120 private- and public-sector partners have committed more than $43 billion, including more than $31 billion from private-sector partners alone. After three years of operation, Power Africa has helped to facilitate private-sector power transactions that are expected to generate 4,600 megawatts of new, cleaner power. Similarly, the contributions of the United States to the Green Climate Fund are financing projects that will help developing countries mitigate and improve their resilience to the effects of climate change, including projects in the Gambia, Mali, Malawi, Rwanda, Kenya and Uganda. In order to better serve least-developed countries, the project process has been streamlined to improve funding access, and $3 million per country has been allocated to support the formulation of national climate-change adaptation plans.

The United States is also investing in comprehensive health programmes aimed at preventing and treating diseases. For example, the President's Malaria Initiative (PMI), launched in 2005, provided for a historic $1.2 billion expansion of United States Government resources to fight malaria in sub-Saharan Africa. Last year alone, PMI protected more than 16 million people through the spraying of homes and procured more than 42 million long-lasting insecticide-treated bednets, almost 60 million anti-malarial treatments and more than 54 million rapid diagnostic tests.

Good governance is a central tenet of United States foreign assistance. As President Obama has noted, nothing will unlock Africa's economic potential more than ending the cancer of corruption. The United States leadership, in establishing the Open Government Partnership (OGP), has increased transparency, bolstered citizen engagement and harnessed new technologies to improve good governance, transparency and accountability. In September, South Africa concluded its one-year tenure as lead Government OGP Chair, and we are grateful for its leadership. During the year, South Africa hosted an Africa regional meeting, bringing together members of OGP Governments and civil society from across the continent to exchange best practices. It also co-hosted the OGP five-year anniversary event on the margins of the high-level week of the General Assembly.

Ensuring that the OGP plays a meaningful role in broadening the fight against corruption in pivotal African countries such as its newest member, Nigeria, and in advancing transparent implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, will be a key priority going forward. The United States is pleased that the OGP steering committee recently endorsed a new partnership with NEPAD, and looks forward to strong collaboration in advancing work on the continent.

Finally, gender equality is a core component of United States foreign assistance. Years of experience have taught us that greater gender equality means better outcomes for everyone, and that when we invest in women and girls we see a direct benefit to their potential as individuals, as well as related improvements in their families, communities and entire societies. The United States is fully committed to promoting gender equality through partnerships such as Let Girls Learn, which helps adolescent girls complete their education and pursue their broader aspirations. The Obama administration's holistic approach to girls' education includes investments of more than $1 billion in new and ongoing programming by the United States Government in more than 50 countries, and nearly 100 private-sector partnerships for promoting the education of adolescent girls around the world.

We look forward to continuing our work with the African Union and the Governments and peoples of Africa as equal partners, in the efforts to make the vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063 a reality.

Mrs. Rodríguez Abascal (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to thank the Secretary-General for his reports (A/71/189, A/71/203 and A/71/211) on today's agenda items.

We align ourselves with the statement delivered earlier by the representative of Thailand on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

In Cuba's view, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is unquestionably one of the most commendable initiatives launched in Africa in recent decades, based on principles that reflect the commitment of the region's political leaders to making political, economic and social progress on the continent.

The Secretary-General's report on NEPAD (A/71/189) takes account of the economic and social transformations that Africa has been undergoing. However, we must recognize that the road to sustainable development continues to present challenges. In many cases, a chronic lack of resources for public investment is an obstacle to full implementation of NEPAD's development plans. Where international trade is concerned, African countries face numerous structural hindrances to their access to global markets. The lack of financing for trade and the presence of tariff and non-tariff barriers in developed countries' markets, including subsidies that distort trade, continue to prevent Africa from achieving its export potential.

The continuing decline in official development assistance (ODA) is another cause for concern about development initiatives in Africa. That decline and the unfavourable world economic conditions during the period under consideration present a true challenge for the implementation for 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union 2063 Agenda and endanger the progress already made in implementing the Millennium Development Goals. We call upon all developed countries to comply with their ODA commitments and step up their support for NEPAD.

Cuba has always defended the historical and moral responsibility of the international community to help African development in the wake of centuries of colonialism, looting and siphoning off of African wealth. For some, Africa continues to be merely a myth and a veritable mine of resources, a place where they can obtain substantial profits without paying a high cost and without suffering the disastrous consequences that have plagued the African people as a result of this centuries-long process of exploitation and pillage. To take care of African problems, we must get rid of that philosophy of profit and plunder at any cost, which underpins the unfair international economic order that has been forced upon the world.

Not only does Africa continue to be marginalized and completely disadvantaged in international economic relations, but its levels of poverty are continuing to grow at an alarming rate, and it is experiencing increased armed conflict and the spread of diseases that are decimating entire nations on the African continent. The cause of this has been the economic and financial policies and the unbridled waves of privatization accompanying the neoliberal globalization process imposed by the developed countries. It is these policies and this privatization, which were supposed to make the situation in Africa less precarious, and not the weaknesses of African institutions — as the developed countries want us to believe — that are to blame.

As the Secretary-General's report on NEPAD states, the 2030 Agenda, in which the specific problems of Africa are recognized, began to be implemented in 2015 and the importance of supporting the 2063 Agenda and NEPAD was reaffirmed. Both Agendas share similar strategic principles, with a focus on people, peace, justice, human rights, prosperity, environmental sustainability and mutually accountable partnerships. Cuba firmly believes that, in the context of NEPAD, the African leaders will be able to resolve the conflicts that currently present additional obstacles to achieving the economic and social development goals of the region.

The people of Cuba are direct and natural heirs of the gallantry, courage and spirit of endurance of Africa, which has struggled heroically for centuries to overcome countless challenges. We are proud of that. Africa is very dear to our hearts in Cuba — it is an essential part of what Cubans are. It informs our identity and our culture; many Cubans have their roots in Africa. Thanks to the profound international beliefs of the Cuban Revolution, our country has always shown solidarity with Africa, whether in the form of unconditional support for anti-colonialist struggles or through cooperation projects in many spheres of economic and social development.

In the context of South-South cooperation, our country continues to provide its human capital and experience in its cooperation with African countries. Allow me to mention a few prime examples of that cooperation. More than 2,600 African fellowship-holders are studying subjects at universities in Cuba, including medical science. More than 5,000 Cuban cooperation workers are serving in 34 African nations in order to boost development in diverse areas, including public health, education, agriculture, sports and

construction. More than 27,000 African patients have recovered their sight through a joint Cuban-Venezuelan programme known as Operation Miracle.

And Africa has always shown solidarity with Cuba. In the more than 50 years since the economic, commercial and financial blockade was first imposed on my country, the Governments and peoples of Africa have closed ranks in support of the Cuban people's right to decide their own destiny.

Cuba has always been supportive of the African continent in its quest to eradicate malaria by means of the vector control programme, including the construction of biolarvicide production factories in Africa, staff development initiatives, the training of community workers and informal educational discussions on environmental sanitation. The malaria control programme has borne fruit: it has reduced infant and maternal mortality rates, which is an important result when we bear in mind that 90 per cent of malaria-related deaths occur in Africa and that most of the victims are children under 5 years old. Cuba will continue to help the African continent to eradicate the epidemic.

Our country will continue to support the African Union and all the regional coordination mechanisms in the quest to find African solutions to African problems. It will continue to advocate respect for the sovereignty of the African continent and non-interference in the internal affairs of African countries. We hope that the General Assembly will tackle the true root causes of the challenges facing the continent, which are the result of decades of colonization and plundering. African countries urgently need special and differential treatment, market access for their products, stable commodity prices, external debt forgiveness, access to technologies, significantly increased ODA and adequate financial resources for their purposes, which must be provided without interference or preconditions. Africa cannot wait any longer. Let us act now.

Mr. Al-Otaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my pleasure to speak on the agenda items under consideration. We have taken note of the reports of the Secretary-General (A/71/189, A/71/203 and A/71/211) and his recommendations. We welcome the progress made in implementing the New Partnership for Africa's Development and all the achievements with regard to security, food security, development, the rule of law, education and the empowerment of women in Africa.

I express my deep thanks to the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa and the Office of the Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations for the rich debate and deliberations during Africa Week, which will lead to the economic and political development of Africa.

In 2015 we witnessed the adoption of two historic agendas: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union 2063 Agenda, which represents the long-term strategic vision for the transformation of Africa over the next 50 years. The first Ten-Year Implementation Plan was adopted in 2015. We believe that through synergy, the two Agendas will lead to the achievement of sustainable development in Africa and of all African development objectives. That has been reflected in the report (A/71/203) of the Secretary-General and the focus on the four thematic areas.

We would like to concentrate here on the major objectives: infrastructure development, trade, a conflict-free Africa, and gender equality and women's empowerment. We stress the major challenges facing the African continent, including the lack of financial support and the current worrisome economic situation, given the unfavourable global economic conditions. The report highlights the fact that African countries continue to face weak productivity in the agricultural sector. They are suffering from a lack of financing, unemployment and challenges resulting from climate change. We also would like to stress the areas of importance, namely, good governance, the rule of law, human rights and the empowerment of women.

Kuwait remains convinced of the importance of cooperation in all areas of development. We have provided assistance to developing countries, including the least developed among them, throughout the world, particularly in Africa, through our aid agencies. We base our policies on the conviction that assistance and cooperation will enable development projects to be carried out, thereby ensuring sustainable development for the benefit of such countries. My country will continue to support the aspirations of developing countries and those of African countries in particular. The sum total of contributions and assistance provided by the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development has amounted to $6.4 billion.

We are very proud of our historical relations with African countries. We enjoy observer status in the African Union. In November 2013, we hosted the

third Africa-Arab Summit on the theme "Partners in development and investment". We also provided concessionary loans as part of our commitment to African countries. We will hand over the chairmanship of the Summit to Mauritania prior to the fourth Summit, which will be held in Malabo in November. We will confer awards in the area of health for 2015 and that of food security for 2016. We will continue to maintain our policy of cooperation on the basis of our deeply held conviction of the need to support quality education and combat illiteracy in Africa.

In conclusion, we reiterate our steadfast commitment to all the aspirations and hopes of African countries to achieve sustainable development in the continent.

Mr. Kononuchenko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Let me congratulate the African Union and the United Nations system on a successful Africa Week. The activities held during the event have clearly shown the enormous potential and desire of the countries of Africa to achieve sustainable development. They have already gone far in implementing the Millennium Development Goals.

However, the continent remains vulnerable to various types of challenges, including terrorism, separatism, an imperfect public health system, soil degradation and the unsustainable use of water. It is therefore important to ensure an appropriate level of support for Africa so as to strengthen the positive momentum and help the African countries embark on an irreversible path of progress in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We are of the view that African countries must, independently and without pressure imposed upon them from abroad, make decisions with regard to strategy and tactics to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in line, on the one hand, with their own national priorities, and, on the other, with the collective regional vision of the future of the continent and its place and role in global politics and economics. In that regard, the Russian Federation welcomed the adoption of the African Union Agenda 2063, the key vectors of which are in line with the 2030 Agenda. We support the chorus of the African Union for a balanced and reasoned blending of the two agendas, which will help in their successful implementation.

We agree with the Secretary-General that there is a need to increase assistance to Africa with a view to eradicating poverty, unemployment and inequality, which taken together provide fertile ground for the emergence of conflicts. We call for vital focus to be placed on developing industrial production and transport infrastructure, strengthening trade potential and improving the public health and education systems. In that context, we supported the decision of the General Assembly at its seventieth session to launch a new Industrial Development Decade for Africa (see resolution 70/295).

We trust that African countries, for their part, will continue to update legislation, especially in the areas of finance, taxes and investments, with a view to mobilizing domestic resources and developing partnerships. For our part, we will continue to provide assistance to our African partners through bilateral and multilateral channels. We are prepared to use both traditional forms of assistance and look for new innovative ways for mutually advantageous cooperation.

Russia is actively helping to ease the debt burden of African States. To date, as part of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative, we have forgiven the main portion of Africa's debt of more than $20 billion. We grant wide-ranging trade preferences to African countries. Regarding African goods, we have a preferred customs and tariff regime covering a major portion of Russian imports from Africa.

Substantial support is given for the training of personnel. At present, we have more than 10,000 Africans studying in Russian higher educational institutions, more than 4,000 of whom are paid for from our federal budget. In the 2015/16 academic year sub-Saharan African States have received more than 1,000 scholarships. Russia contributes to international assistance programmes for Africa through the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the World Health Organization and the World Food Programme (WFP). In 2014-2015, through WFP channels, we provided food aid to Somalia, Kenya, Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia for a total of $10 million. To re-equip WFP's pool of vehicles in a number of African countries, Russia allocated Kamaz vehicles that were worth around $10 million.

Russia also provided African States with assistance in the health sector. Our country was one of the first to react to the Ebola virus epidemic in West African countries. To combat the virus, Russia allocated more than $60 million. We made a contribution of about $6.6 million to the fund of the International Civil

Defence Organization and earmarked it for purchase in Russia and delivery to Conakry and Monrovia of specialized medical modules, mobile medical warehouses and Kamaz vehicles.

Mr. Chenneerappa (India): We are meeting at a time of hope for multilateralism. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is under way and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change will enter into force next month. In addition, Africa has separately commenced the first phase of implementing its own African Union Agenda 2063, which builds on the core priorities of the now 15-year-old New Partnership for Africa's Development. International collaboration remains crucial in assisting Africa move towards the effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Africa has made rapid strides in recent years. Its overall economic output has grown. Poverty rates have fallen. Life expectancy has increased. Today Africa is a young continent. Rates of infant and maternal mortality have fallen. Primary school enrolment, including for girls, has increased. Malnutrition has been reduced and access to safe drinking water has increased. HIV infection and prevalence rates have been reversed. Foreign direct investment in sectors such as mining, has increased in recent years. Expanding mobile connectivity is leading to innovative money transfers.

We appreciate the organization of the ongoing Africa Week from 13 to 17 October, which provides a good opportunity to engage the entities of the United Nations systems on ways to further strengthen the institutional partnership as a means of effectively implementing the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. We congratulate the Office of the Under-Secretary-General and the Special Adviser on Africa on successfully focusing the attention of the international community on this matter.

The continuing challenges to development in Africa are well studied. Some of the critical constraints persist, including difficulties surrounding agricultural productivity; skill development; manufacturing capability; the current low commodity prices and slow economic growth; lack of diversification of economies; poor connectivity and infrastructure; limited regional integration; and rapid unplanned urbanization. Chronic armed conflicts for control over resources in certain regions of Africa also impede progress. The reliance on official development assistance continues to be high despite the declining levels of such aid from traditional donors, although collaboration with non-traditional donors is growing. There is wide economic disparity across the African continent. While Africa's combined gross domestic product (GDP) is $2.4 trillion, the top 10 economies of Africa account for nearly $2 trillion, while 34 countries have a GDP of less than $15 billion each and around 10 countries have a GDP of less than $2 billion each. Africa's trade is only 3 per cent of the global figure, and intra-Africa trade is a mere 12 per cent of that.

India and Africa represent one third of humanity. Our similar and shared experiences and struggles translate into a similar scale of challenges and concerns at the level of both national priorities and collective interests in an increasingly globalized world. India and Africa worked together to develop a common understanding of our core priorities for an inclusive economic growth to eradicate poverty and allocate adequate resources in the debates on SDGs, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda.

There are great synergies between the African Union's Agenda 2063, the 2030 Agenda and the focused priorities being pursued by the Government of India. The India-Africa strategic partnership seeks to address many of the challenges that the African Union and our African partners have identified. The core strengths of our development partnership are capacity-building, mobilizing financial support and the sharing of technical expertise. The partnership complements our rapidly growing trade and investment links.

We focus on programmes for poverty eradication; provision of affordable quality health care and education; generating employment opportunities; building access to modern and renewable energy services; infrastructure; and connectivity between resources and markets. Today Africa and India represent young and dynamic societies and economies that are intensifying their collaboration to achieve greater prosperity for their peoples.

Building on our bilateral engagements, India has initiated closer interaction with Africa's regional communities over the past three decades. Since the First India-Africa Forum Summit of 2008, more than 40,000 Indian scholarships have been taken up by our African friends to participate in more than 300 different training programmes at 40 specialized institutions in a number of areas. They include information technology,

renewable energy, agriculture, marine and aeronautical engineering, marine hydrography, entrepreneurship in small and medium-sized enterprises, rural development, parliamentary affairs, logistics and management, climate-change adaptation, disaster management, cybersecurity, forensic sciences and defence and security.

In the past decade, India has approved almost $9 billion in concessional credit for nearly 140 projects in more than 40 African countries, with special emphasis on partners that are least developed countries (LDCs) and small island developing States. The areas have included power generation and distribution, water supply and irrigation, agriculture, light manufacturing, renewable energy, construction of infrastructure, and so forth. At the Third India-Africa Forum Summit, held last October, India offered an additional $100 billion in concessional credit on more attractive terms than in the past, a further 50,000 scholarships and grants-in-aid of $600 million over the next five years.

India was among the first emerging economies to offer a duty-free market access scheme for LDCs. In 2014, that unilateral scheme was further expanded and now extends to 34 African countries and is aimed at increasing their exports to India. Africa-India trade multiplied twentyfold in the last 15 years and doubled in the last five years to reach nearly $72 billion last year, making India the fourth largest trading partner for Africa. Indian foreign direct investment in Africa has also surged, with major investments having taken place in the telecommunications, information technology (IT), energy, engineering, chemicals, pharmaceuticals and automobile sectors. Some Indian financial institutions and infrastructure companies have also collaborated with the African Development Bank to facilitate project development efforts.

India has actively worked with international partners and the United Nations to collectively address the challenges posed by pandemics, including HIV/AIDS and the Ebola virus in Africa, including through affordable quality generic medicines. Our flagship programmes of telemedicine and tele-education have helped expand access to education and health to people in remote areas. India's experience of using IT tools for wide-ranging e-governance aspects for greater reach, transparency, accountability and financial inclusion, including the provision of a unique identity for over one billion people, can be of interest in the African context.

India has also offered to assist Africa in the use of space technology for multiple development uses, including crop inventory, drought assessment and monitoring, water resources management, forestry and the environment, locust early-warning, infrastructure development and disaster management. Those specialized real-time IT and space-technology solutions can greatly assist Governments in the planning and monitoring of the various development projects leading to the implementation of the SDGs.

Besides the wide-ranging development and humanitarian assistance efforts, India also partners with Africa in promoting peace and security through its long-standing contribution to United Nations peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts. Recent initiatives have also included trilateral cooperation, along with the United States of America, to offer training for Africa in United Nations peacekeeping.

The long-standing India-Africa partnership is based on solidarity and mutual respect; it is neither prescriptive nor exploitative. It represents South-South cooperation in all its dimensions and continues to contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Agenda 2063.

Mr. Roet (Israel): First, I would like to convey my condolences for the untimely death of His Excellency Mr. Girma Asmerom Tesfay, the late Permanent Representative of Eritrea to the United Nations. He was not only a colleague here in the Hall, he was also a colleague in our building, and I remember vividly meeting him many times a week. Our heartfelt sympathy goes out to the people of Eritrea and to the Permanent Mission of Eritrea.

Before I begin, I would like to take the opportunity to thank Under-Secretary-General Maged Abdelaziz and the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa for their commitment to promoting peace and development in Africa. We were delighted to have Under-Secretary-General Abdelaziz join us at the special event entitled "Israeli Innovation and Technologies in Africa", which our Prime Minister hosted during the high-level general debate.

Africa has taken great strides toward better prosperity in the past few decades, despite the many challenges the continent faces. Those achievements were made possible by our working together to foster economic and social development and to establish stability in the region. Israel's first Prime Minister,

David Ben-Gurion, once said, "It's not enough to be up to date. You have to be up to tomorrow."

When Israel looks at its African neighbours today, we see the incredible development that has occurred thus far, but more importantly, the immense potential and hope for an even better tomorrow. The African continent is blessed with vast natural resources, such as oil, gold, diamonds and metals, but the greatest and most precious resource of all is its human capital, the people of Africa. An African proverb tells us that "Where there are many, nothing goes wrong". Well, there are many people living in Africa, over 1.2 billion men and women. But Africa is rich, not only because of its raw materials, but because of its raw talent. The trick is to find the keys to unlock that talent. Israel has been doing just that very successfully with its own population since its inception, and we are currently fostering both old and new partnerships with African States and sharing our methods and knowledge with them.

Israel shares a special historical connection with Africa that dates all the way back to biblical times when trade relations were established between the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon in Jerusalem — yes, the same Jerusalem that was mentioned yesterday during the vote in UNESCO when the connection of Jews to Jerusalem was put into doubt. Israel respects the deep feelings of Christianity and Islam towards Jerusalem. We need to have the same special understanding and respect for Israeli ties to Jerusalem.

In later years, both our peoples overcame many similar challenges that fostered shared values which fuel our relationships to this day. Former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir said it best:

> "[Like Africa]... we had shaken off foreign rule; like them, we had to learn for ourselves how to reclaim the land, how to increase the yields of our crops, how to irrigate... how to live together and how to defend ourselves."

Our common struggles continue even now, as both Africa and Israel combat terrorism, cope with instability in our regions and strive every day for peace and prosperity.

There is no doubt that African nations have the primary responsibility for their social and economic development. After all, the New Partnership for Africa's Development is all about African nations forging an Africa future together. But we live in an age of globalization, connecting us all more profoundly than ever before, and we, the international community, have a joint obligation to develop our world together and to create a better future for our children together. As we decided in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, no one gets left behind. Driven by the Jewish value of *tikkun olam*, which means "reparing the world", Israel strives to help make this world a better place. We are ready to cooperate with our African friends in development efforts in any way we can, whether in agriculture, health, water, irrigation, tourism, cybersecurity and the promotion of entrepreneurship and innovation.

This past July, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu made a historic trip to Africa, during which he declared his intention to return to the continent very soon. Those trips mark a new phase for the Israel-Africa relationship. Although Israel is not technically a part of Africa, we feel we are spiritually and geographically linked, now more than ever. As the Prime Minister said in his speech, "Israel is coming back to Africa and Africa is coming back to Israel".

Last month, Prime Minister Netanyahu hosted a special event on Israeli innovation and technologies in Africa, here at the United Nations, at which African leaders from over 17 countries were introduced to Israeli technologies that will help to shape the future. As an example, an Israeli company, called WaterGen, demonstrated technology that creates an abundant and renewable source of fresh, clean drinking water, extracted directly from the air, without the need for any special infrastructure, save a small amount of electricity. Imagine that — fresh water pulled out of thin air. Another Israeli company called Energiya Global has developed affordable solar projects worldwide, including in Africa, that provide clean electricity to millions of people and strive to minimize the world's dependence on fossil fuels by creating alternate sources of clean, safe and renewable energy.

Israel is interested in creating partnerships with Africa through both the private and public sectors. Mashav, Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation, has been active throughout the developing world since the late 1950s, assisting countries in alleviating hunger, disease and poverty through technical training and technology transfer, while encouraging self-reliance and innovation. In partnership with Germany, Mashav also launched the Africa Initiative, with the purpose of addressing pressing

global challenges in Africa, such as the eradication of poverty and hunger, food security, climate change and more, in accordance with the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, the Accra Agenda for Action and the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation.

Long-term development and prosperity cannot truly be achieved without stability. That applies to Africa as well. Unfortunately, one of the biggest threats we face today is terrorism. Israel has had to deal with its fair share of terrorism throughout its history. We have come to learn that such threats must be fought constantly and without pause. At the same time, it is vitally important that we never give up on the development of our people and our nation. Global terrorism is a threat to every country, in Africa and throughout the world, and the only way to overcome it and restore stability is if we work together. It is essential that we recognize that the fight against terrorism goes hand in hand with the pursuit of prosperity. Israel is ready and willing to stand with its African neighbours and other partners to eliminate that threat by sharing our knowledge and experience and by working to eradicate terrorism in all of its forms.

Theodor Herzl, Israel's founding father, said "Where there is a will there is a way." His words are used in Israel to this day — they push us forward and encourage us to reach for the seemingly unreachable. Today, with our joint knowledge, technology and resources, the eradication of extremism and the achievement of the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are more than attainable. Together, the countries sitting here in this room today have turned the SDGs into a reality. Together, we have decided to tackle the many new challenges we face. Together, we have decided to make the world a better place for our children and grandchildren. And together, here, today, we embrace the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

Mr. Ayoko (Nigeria): At the outset, my delegation expresses appreciation to the Secretary-General for his insightful reports on this agenda item (A/71/189, A/71/203 and A/71/211). Nigeria endorses the statement delivered by the representative of Thailand, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and by the representative of the Niger, on behalf of the African Group.

Without a doubt, Africa is transforming. Over a decade ago, African leaders demonstrated strong political will and determination by adopting the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) as the African-owned, African-designed and African-led development strategy for the continent's renewal. As one of the five founding countries of NEPAD, Nigeria is very proud to be associated with the agenda for change in Africa.

Since 2001, Africa has witnessed unprecedented progress in political and socioeconomic development at the national and regional levels. However, huge challenges still remain regarding peace and security, inclusive economic growth and sustainable development. My delegation is concerned that the ongoing global economic downturn could reverse the changing narrative coming out of Africa. The slow economic recovery worldwide may hinder the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063. My delegation therefore strongly believes that unless urgent action is taken, individually and collectively, Africa will continue to struggle to overcome extreme poverty, youth unemployment and pervasive social inequalities.

It is in that context that we urge the United Nations and development partners to increase their support for the implementation of sustainable development in Africa. What we need is partnerships, not aid. Stronger partnerships will certainly change the African landscape by helping us to record solid performance in the areas of macroeconomic stability, enhanced capacity development, results-based South-South and Triangular Cooperation, and increased intra-African trade, and, most importantly, that of silencing guns by 2020 for durable peace and good governance in Africa.

In particular, my delegation urges the global community to partner with NEPAD, as the flagship programme of the African Union, in consolidating the gains of the past decade. Specifically, international support for NEPAD should be aligned with Africa's defined development priorities and interests. The continent's growth trajectory could be further enhanced with critical investments in NEPAD-inspired sector programmes in agriculture and infrastructure. To that end, Nigeria calls for the accelerated implementation of the projects under the AU Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa and the AU Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme.

The nexus between peace and development is self-evident, and Nigeria believes that the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa

would facilitate the continent's active participation in the global economy and promote regional economic cooperation and integration. In that regard, we stress that good governance remains a strategic goal for the security, stability and prosperity of the continent. Nigeria will continue to support the bold initiative of the African Peer Review Mechanism, which remains an invaluable asset in the continent's transformative vision and agenda for good governance.

We call upon the international community to support African efforts to strengthen Africa's capacity to address the root causes of conflict and to resolve conflicts in a peaceful manner. Furthermore, we stress the need for the United Nations system to support African regional and subregional organizations in the implementation of counter-terrorism action plans.

For Nigeria, NEPAD remains the embodiment of Africa's development aspirations and the flagship programme of action for Africa to advance by means of inclusive growth and structural industrialization. Its programme of work is geared towards finding durable regional solutions to domestic development challenges. We believe that NEPAD is as relevant and fundamental to Africa's development aspirations today as it was at its establishment in 2001.

The Government of Nigeria continues to support the overriding goal of NEPAD to place African countries, individually and collectively, on the path to sustainable growth and development. It appreciates the emphasis NEPAD has placed on effective partnerships for charting the course of Africa's development. Closely linked to that central theme in NEPAD is the notion that smart partnerships inspire and consolidate African ownership and leadership. NEPAD has demonstrated that with effective programme planning and coordination, the implementation of regional and continental projects is attainable.

NEPAD has consistently demonstrated that political leadership can deliver the necessary guidance and can steer implementation policy to enable change. Nigeria commends the constructive work of NEPAD in the priority area of human capital development, particularly as it relates to skills acquisition; youth and women empowerment; and industrialization, science, technology and innovation. In the same vein, we encourage NEPAD to scale its results-based delivery in consideration of regional integration, natural resource governance and food security.

We applaud the accomplishments of NEPAD in setting multidimensional sector priorities to boost State capacity and revitalize the African renewal. The Nigerian Government will continue to support and play an active role in the strategic facilitation and coordination of regional and continental priority programmes, especially in the AU Presidential Infrastructure Champions Initiative.

The African transformation is also evident in the social development sector. The 2015 World Health Organization (WHO) report indicates a dramatic decline in the global malaria burden over the past 15 years. Without a doubt, much work remains to be done, and many countries in Africa continue to experience challenges in rolling back malaria. As a result, they are falling short of national and international targets. As the global community progresses with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the pursuit of malaria elimination, there is an ongoing need for the United Nations system, and especially the WHO Global Technical Strategy for Malaria 2016-2030, to assist in addressing weak health systems and inequitable access to health services, and to increase domestic and international financing in Africa. The experience of combating the Ebola virus disease could be replicated in fighting other public health challenges.

In conclusion, Nigeria reiterates its firm support for and commitment to the mandates of the United Nations Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Africa, NEPAD, led by Dr. Ibrahim Mayaki, and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. We also appreciate the support of all United Nations agencies in strengthening the institutional capacity of NEPAD. We urge that more be done for Africa's development.

Africa should not be left behind, in any circumstance. At the very heart of NEPAD is the core objective of halting the marginalization of Africa in the international arena. We must be careful to ensure that the changing global dynamics do not leave Africa stranded or sidelined as a spectator. It is vital that Africa play an influential role in effective international development cooperation. I assure the Assembly that Nigeria will continue to work for an Africa that is integrated, united, peaceful, strong and resilient, in order to boost the prosperity of its people and society.

Mr. Annakou (Libya) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, let me thank the Secretary-General for his

reports on the agenda items under consideration (A/71/189, A/71/203 and A/71/211). I also wish to thank Ambassador Maged Abdelaziz, Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on Africa, and Mr. Ibrahim Mayaki, Chief Executive Officer of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), for their efforts to support the African continent.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements made by the representative of the Kingdom of Thailand on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and by the representative of the Niger on behalf of the African Group.

This plenary meeting on the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is being held one year after the leaders of the world adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which set 17 goals and 169 targets and gave the assurance that no one would be left behind. The meeting is extremely important because, in discussing NEPAD, we are moving from words to actions and from planning to implementation at the international level, in keeping with the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

As regards Africa, Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want is a 50-year agenda that is designed to transform Africa into a continent of peace and security. Additionally, there is a 10-year implementation plan, which was adopted by the twenty-fifth African Union Summit, held in South Africa, in January 2015.

It is important to coordinate the relevant plans of action, particularly the 10-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda. We must move immediately to make these programmes operational and to implement them. NEPAD has a key role to play in ensuring coherence between the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and in reaching goals and targets at the national level, taking into account the religious and cultural specificities of the countries of the continent. Coordination and integration are both important in the African continent and are only possible through integrated implementation, first at the national level and in various geographical areas of Africa and then among the different regions. Only thus can we ensure the full integration of the continent.

Despite all the efforts made and the progress achieved with the help of our partners, the continent continues to face many challenges in the implementation of the ambitious 2030 Agenda, including high levels of unemployment, quantitative and qualitative deficiencies in education, a lack of basic services such as drinking water and electricity, and weak infrastructure. It is vital that developed countries comply with their pledges to African countries and support them in spurring economic growth and attracting investment. Such support should include private-sector initiatives to facilitate technology transfers, especially in the areas of food security, infrastructure, human resources and the acquisition by youth and women of skills that will enable them to contribute to the implementation of the SDGs.

As regards peace and security, several States — including my own — are unfortunately embroiled in armed conflict. There is a close relationship between security and development; one cannot be achieved without the other. Therefore, institutional cooperation with the African Union needs to be strengthened if we are to prevent conflicts, maintain peace and deal with post-conflict situations. Human rights must be protected and disarmament imposed so as to ensure democracy, the rule of law and good governance and ensure economic stability in Africa.

Despite security issues in my country, the lack of stability and our stalled economy and development, Libya is committed to continuing its cooperation with African States, once its economic health has been restored, under the auspices of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, so as to achieve peace and prosperity through joint action and the implementation of agreements. We feel that the phenomenon of illicit migration must be dealt with using solutions that address the root causes, in particular development, in the countries of origin, so that those countries can receive their people back, truly develop and use the transfer of technology to enhance capacities.

Finally, let me say that a number of developing countries, particularly in Africa and including Libya, are suffering from a serious brain drain and the illicit drain of capital to other countries. States, particularly those to which those assets have been funnelled, must therefore cooperate in recovering that wealth and returning it to the countries of origin, so that the latter can use the capital to modernize their infrastructure.

Mr. Hilale (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to convey our deepest condolences to the Government and the people of Eritrea following the

death of our brother and colleague, Ambassador Girma Asmerom Tesfay. May God have mercy on his soul.

My delegation would like to align itself with the statements made by the representatives of Thailand and the Niger on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and the Group of African States, respectively.

My delegation is pleased to participate in this important meeting of the General Assembly devoted to the sustainable development of Africa, which represents the culmination of Africa Week this year. This debate, which is taking place one year after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, provides a welcome opportunity to consider the best means for achieving sustainable development and stability in Africa.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay special homage to Mr. Maged Abdelaziz, Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa, for the outstanding organization of Africa Week and for all of his and his Office's tireless and selfless efforts to advance the interests of Africa within the United Nations system and elsewhere. I am also pleased to congratulate Mr. Ibrahim Mayaki, the new Chief Executive Officer of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, and I wish him well and good luck in carrying out his mandate.

The Millennium Development Goals have given a significant boost to African countries and enabled them to achieve remarkable progress in the area of economic and social development. Despite that progress, the continent still faces numerous challenges capable of slowing its growth and development. Our priority should be to strengthen commitments to African development in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the African continent. In that context, the special needs of Africa's development should receive due attention in the framework of the implementation of the new 2030 Agenda. Broadening the base of the partnership for African development is an absolute necessity, if we want Africa to meet the SDGs by 2030.

The transformation of African economies through industrialization and the strengthening of their production capacity, as well as through the promotion of economic growth, have been decisive factors in lifting millions of Africans out of poverty, combating youth unemployment and empowering African women. Encouraging investment, developing infrastructure and improving market access and technology transfer are key components in enabling the economic emergence of African countries.

We believe that strengthening the African private sector will contribute to the diversification of African economies, enhancing added value and creating employment, income and opportunities. We note, moreover, that pledges made in connection with official development assistance, which remains a significant source for financing development, especially for African least developed countries, must be honoured.

African countries have shown a strong commitment to promoting stability and peace as drivers and catalysts, as well as absolutely essential preconditions, for development. Economic development can be achieved only in a context in which peace and stability predominate. Moreover, the increase in terrorism and violent extremism in several areas of Africa is likely to compromise development and security efforts in our continent. We therefore call on the international community to provide integral support to African countries, so that peace and development can mutually reinforce each other. As our colleague from Libya just stated, there is no peace without development and there will be no development without peace, stability and security. We wish to point out that the partnership with African countries should not jeopardize their national ownership and should respect their national priorities and development strategies.

Climate change is a major challenge facing the development of Africa and requires global solutions in order to mitigate its effects and support adaptation efforts through adequate funding and technology transfer. African countries, which contribute the least to the phenomenon of climate change, are among those that suffer most from its negative impact. Climate-change financing will be of critical importance, so that development in African countries can be sustainable.

Morocco welcomes the achievement of the entry into force of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which will serve as the cornerstone of the global framework to combat climate change in the coming years. The twenty-second session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 22), which has been dubbed the COP of Action, is to be held in Marrakech, Morocco, from 7 to 18 November, and will present an opportunity to initiate actions and initiatives aimed at turning the Paris Agreement into a reality. One initiative, among

others, pertains to adapting agriculture in Africa with a view to improving production based on sustainability.

Morocco has always viewed South-South cooperation as one of the pillars of its foreign policy, especially with regard to African countries. Morocco remains convinced that only an African joint action, based on a shared commitment and strong regional integration, will enable African countries to overcome the challenges associated with sustainable development, peace and security.

In that spirit, Morocco has launched partnership and cooperation programmes with African countries in many areas, such as education, health care, infrastructure, agriculture and vocational training. In addition to the cooperation initiated by the Moroccan Government, Moroccan private companies have also increased their investments and presence in the continent in key development sectors, such as air and sea transportation, banking, housing, telecommunications, tourism and infrastructure projects.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that Morocco is determined to commit itself to a more dynamic and active partnership at the international and regional levels for the development of our continent.

Mr. Gad (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, my delegation would like to express its deep condolences for the loss of our colleague, the Permanent Representative of Eritrea.

Egypt aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of the Niger on behalf of the Group of African States and by the representative of Thailand on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Allow me to add a few points.

First of all, I would like to express my thanks to the Secretary-General for the reports on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, on the New Partnership for Africa's Development, and on the Decade to Roll Back Malaria in Developing Countries, Particularly in Africa (A/71/203, A/71/211, A/71/189), and the recommendations therein. My delegation would also like to express its thanks to the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa for its ongoing efforts and for the excellent organization of Africa Week 2016, together with the comprehensive deliberations aimed at promoting development and stability in Africa.

Despite the relative improvement in the peace and security situation in Africa, some parts of the continent still suffer instability and threats to peace and security. That can be attributed to foreign interference in some cases and to the phenomenon of global terrorism in others. Nevertheless, other reasons, while positive in themselves, can also be responsible for the state of affairs that we are currently witnessing in Africa. They are related to the democratic process, in other words, free elections, the transfer of power and different constitutional systems; their existence indicates that there has been genuine development in the political life on the continent.

Against that backdrop, numerous efforts have been carried out on the continent over the past years to address and prevent various crises through the creation of structures for the maintenance of international and African peace and security, but also through the development of good-governance architecture to address various crises and strengthen and promote democratic principles. Africa has achieved progress in terms of establishing and maintaining peace and security. We can cite, for example, the role of the multinational African forces in combating the Boko Haram terrorist group in its attacks in the Lake Chad Basin region.

Africa is also facing major development challenges: poor human and institutional capacities and weak production and service sectors. That calls for more support for African efforts and for addressing the root causes of conflicts. Indeed, in 2013, Africa adopted its own development agenda, Agenda 2063. It was followed by the first 10-year implementation plan and the Tripartite Free Trade Area Agreement between the three regional economic communities, as well as ongoing efforts on the part of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

Alongside such regional economic developments, African countries actively participated in and contributed to the success of the international negotiations for the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Plan and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, based on their conviction of the importance of supporting an international sustainable development agenda through global partnerships to promote regional efforts, as well as the efforts of NEPAD.

I would like to highlight the efforts over the past years to combat malaria in developing countries, in particular in Africa. We call on the international community to continue providing technical and financial support for the implementation of malaria-related prevention and treatment programmes and efforts. Africa remains convinced of the importance of working together with all of the international community's stakeholders to sustain and promote all efforts aimed at maintaining peace and security throughout the continent and to ensure sustainable development. Hence, there is a need to build strategic partnerships that are aligned with national priorities to accelerate development, in particular human development, and to deploy further diplomatic efforts aimed at preventing conflicts and developing resilience.

We believe that there is no sustainable development without peace and there is no peace without sustainable development. Similarly, the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 cannot be achieved without adequate means of implementation and the mobilization of sufficient resources, including official development assistance and support from international financial institutions, and the promotion of South-South cooperation, efforts to combat illicit financial flows and good management of the natural resources in Africa. That all can be reinforced through the reform of the United Nations development system in order to provide the necessary support to all developing countries and in particular the least developed countries.

In conclusion, Egypt reaffirms that it will continue to spare no effort to boost cooperation at both the national and the international levels so as to meet the development aspirations of the African peoples and nations and create a peaceful, stable society.

Mr. Buhler (France) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to join previous speakers in expressing to the Secretary-General, on behalf of the French delegation, my sincere thanks for the three high-quality reports (A/71/203, A/71/211, A/71/189) that he has presented today to the General Assembly. The reports paint a very complete picture of the progress achieved in the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and commitments made for development in Africa. They also make a significant contribution to the analysis of the causes of conflict and the efforts for peace and sustainable development in Africa.

The submission of those reports, which concluded Africa Week, which was full of interesting activities, was particularly welcome. With this year's theme of implementing Sustainable Development Goals, the General Assembly should act on the results of the historic international conferences held in 2015 on development and climate, which reflect a renewed commitment to international cooperation: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

With the adoption of the first 10-year plan for implementing Agenda 2063, which includes all of NEPAD's priorities, the African Union is showing its willingness to put Africa decisively on a new path for development. France welcomes the important work done by NEPAD and the efforts of African countries to implement the NEPAD programme in its various priority areas, including infrastructure development, agriculture, health, education, the environment, technology, innovation, women's empowerment and gender equality. Much progress has been made in showing that Africa is a continent full of promise for the future. We should welcome that.

But there are also significant challenges. Many obstacles and impediments are hindering development in Africa. I could talk about climate change, which affects the African continent in particular, especially the least-developed African countries. In that respect, the entry into force on 4 November of the Paris Agreement is good news for Africa, and I would like, once again, to underscore the key role played by the Secretary-General in achieving that Agreement, which some thought was impossible.

Other concerns should also be emphasized: problems related to forced migration on the continent, too many conflicts in the African theatre and the plague of terrorism. Efforts undertaken to address those challenges should be stressed. The reports presented today by the Secretary-General highlight many approaches for the future. France welcomes, in particular, the recommendations aimed at strengthening the African Peace and Security Architecture in order to address the underlying causes of conflict and combat terrorism. We underscore our interest in measures recommended by the Secretary-General to strengthen the rights and the role of women as drivers of peace and sustainable development in Africa.

The obstacles to development are also due to a shortage of infrastructure on the continent. African Governments must also step up the reform of their national regulatory frameworks, promote regional infrastructure projects and do more to involve the local private sector. With African Governments, the international community must also redouble its efforts to mobilize additional resources, including innovative financing.

In stressing France's commitment to developing the African continent, the President of the French Republic launched, on 20 September, from the rostrum of the General Assembly, an appeal for Africa. He proposed a plan enabling all Africans to have access to electricity. Two thirds of Africans still do not have access to electricity, which is a major impediment to sustainable growth in Africa. He recalled his initiative for renewable energy in Africa, under which 10 donors have already pledged €10 billion by 2020. France will pay 20 per cent, or one fifth, of that amount. Today, I renew the call on Member States to join that effort.

The President of Republic also reiterated his commitment to continuing the fight against the three pandemics in Africa, in particular by maintaining the French contribution to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria in the amount of €1.08 billion for the period of 2017 to 2019.

Mr. Sesay (Sierra Leone): The Sierra Leone delegation thanks the Secretary-General for his reports on the agenda item before us today (A/71/203 and A/71/211). We also extend our appreciation to the organizers of this event.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Niger on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the Group of African States, respectively.

Eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for achieving sustainable development. My delegation supports poverty eradication as the overarching objective of the post-2015 development agenda. But in order to achieve our goal, fast-tracking action is crucial. Poverty induces lots of suffering among people. It is our obligation to end that situation of suffering quickly. Talking is not enough. Action that gets resources and capacities to the poor is a moral obligation, and we must not allow such resources and capacities to get stuck in bureaucratic channels.

We must also ensure stability. Stability and peace are crucial for achieving our worthy development goals. Poverty is a form of instability. It is instability in the lives of the poor; it is instability and suffering in the lives of women and children; and it is instability that moves up to engulf whole societies. That is so because it makes it easy for its weaponization and misappropriation, resulting in the infliction of greater harm and insecurity on a society.

We believed that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) ensured the most energetic anti-poverty push in human history. However, although Africa had fast-growing economies when the MDGs were being implemented, the continent lags behind in poverty reduction rates, food security, maternal and infant mortality, fragility, environmental degradation, gender inequality and youth unemployment. That is why the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) should ensure a redoubling of efforts to achieve the yearnings that remained unfulfilled in the MDGs.

Sierra Leone had a weak start with the MDGs in 2000, emerging from a brutal civil war at the time. We had a mixed basket of outcomes. But this time around, we are determined to move on fast with actions. This is why we also see the SDGs as a recast of the country's development framework. Our agenda for prosperity and the SDGs are profoundly aligned. Sierra Leone was one of six African States among the 22 countries that were voluntarily reviewed during the Economic and Social Council high-level political forum in July this year. We shared our perspectives as to how we intend to implement the SDGs nationally, the challenges that we envisage as we move forward and how we wish to overcome them.

As we commence the second year of implementing the SDGs, it is imperative that we ensure "stateness". We must ensure that quality not only in terms of the central State, but also the local state and the State's service-delivery functions. In Sierra Leone, recovering State functions was emphasized after the civil war in the 1990s. Our current post-Ebola recovery programme prioritizes rebuilding the Government's delivery of services in the health, agriculture, education and other sectors.

The Government of Sierra Leone is determined and committed to further improving peace and security. We have moved from a country on the agenda of the Security Council to a nation that is a storehouse of

lessons on how to successfully move away from war to peace and development. As a signatory and pilot country of the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States, we pay great attention to domesticating SDG 16 on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies.

Our Government is keen to intensify the fight against corruption and promote good governance, accountability and transparency. We also urge accountability and transparency in institutions and mechanisms to support African countries. As we move ahead with the implementation of the SDGs that promote religious tolerance and coexistence as pillars of stability and development, we have all seen how entrepreneurs of conflict misappropriate the substance and symbolism of religion. We must engage religious leaders and adherents. We must build on the resources for tolerance and peace that exist within religious traditions in order to promote stability, peace and security in Africa.

We must strengthen partnerships for recognizing and promoting the contribution of women to peace, stability and growth. As my delegation noted in another forum, Africa is a continent where for too long women's contributions to peace, democracy and development have been underemphasized in our discussions. That must change. We must acknowledge that women hold up half the sky in Africa. We believe that such an acknowledgement will build better partnerships to support women to hold up the skies in less tiring and painful ways.

We urge the promotion of programmes that acknowledge youth as dignified, humane and productive forces for Africa's current and future development. Africa has more young people as a percentage of its population than any other continent. Acknowledging and promoting youth is Africa's best chance for overcoming its stability, peace and development challenges, an effort that must be integral to our actions.

We must also acknowledge the threat caused by diseases and environmental degradation to peace, stability and security. Sierra Leone and its neighbours teetered on the brink when Ebola struck. We defeated Ebola, and we are now implementing a post-Ebola recovery plan. Success with that programme is as important as the peacekeeping that sustained our peace following the civil war of the 1990s. We urge partnerships for resilient health-care systems in order to ensure stability, peace and development.

Malaria continues to be a serious health concern for the continent. It is unfortunate that the disease, which is completely preventable and treatable, should continue to kill thousands of people, especially children, on our continent. We must therefore continue to closely cooperate in the global pursuit of the goals of the African Leaders Malaria Alliance and the Action and Investment to Defeat Malaria 2016-2030, the latter as the successor to the Roll Back Malaria Partnership. It is in that regard that my delegation welcomes the continued commitment of the international community to eradicating malaria and other diseases.

Sierra Leone contributes almost nothing to global warming, but we are adjudged to be the third most vulnerable country to the effects of climate change. That is why for us climate change is an immediate existential threat. That is why we welcome the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. We are committed to implementing its provisions in Sierra Leone, and we seek increased global action on implementing the provisions of the Agreement and other environmental protocols.

Let me conclude by reaffirming Sierra Leone's strongest support for NEPAD.

The Acting President: In accordance with resolution 2011(XX), of 11 October 1965, and decision 56/475, of 15 August 2002, I now call on the observer of the African Union.

Mr. Mayaki (African Union): The African continent is demonstrating that it is capable of economic, political and social transformation. As the technical body of the African Union, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) mechanism is central to those transformative efforts. The role of that mechanism is to implement the African Union's Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want in a manner coherent with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The quality of that implementation will depend on sound ownership and sound partnerships.

The year 2016 consolidated the gains made following the adoption of Agenda 2063 and its first 10-year implementation plan, for the period 2014-2023. That strategic framework has set highly ambitious targets for achieving the Africa We Want, namely, a continent that is stable, prosperous and at peace with itself. Through the common African positions, the Goals set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development have been aligned with Agenda 2063, creating productive synergies and opening strong areas

for collaborative action. Agenda 2063 is an effective vehicle through which Africa can implement the SDGs. In the light of that convergence, the continued support of the international community for pan-African institutions will be instrumental. That support should be particularly reinforced as regards the African Peer Review Mechanism, Africa's leading body for governance improvement. The SDGs can succeed only if they succeed in Africa.

Infrastructure remains one of Africa's top priorities. As one of the main coordinators of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), we underscore the need for seeking investments from various sources for its implementation. To that end, we have set up a continental business network that allows for engagement among a network of high-level African policymakers and the private sector on a range of strategic issues that are directed at promoting investments in regional and domestic infrastructure projects.

On the margins of the opening of the seventy-first session of the General Assembly, the NEPAD agency concerned held a dialogue at the New York Stock Exchange with 16 pension funds and sovereign wealth funds, focusing on the roles of the private and public sectors in de-risking infrastructure development projects identified as priorities for the continent. In order to improve Africa's investment attractiveness in the infrastructure area, we also launched a transboundary initiative on transport and logistics called MoveAfrica in May 2016 in Kigali, Rwanda. That continental instrument aims to drive down costs and increase logistical efficiency for operators working in Africa, thereby complementing PIDA and the programme for the Presidential Infrastructure Champion Initiative and the One Stop Border Posts and facilitating regional integration.

Agriculture and rural development continue to be a key strategic focus for NEPAD. Following the Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods, we revisited the support extended to countries and regions by opting for a more thematic focus. That shift was informed by a series of country reviews aimed at promoting the design of concrete agricultural transformation systems, based on ownership at the national level, making sure that small-scale farmers are not left behind, particularly women.

NEPAD has also been instrumental in transferring the Grow Africa secretariat from the World Economic Forum to NEPAD in order to boost agribusiness development in accordance with the principles of responsible investment in agriculture and food systems, as defined by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Together with Japan, we jointly launched the Initiative for Food and Nutrition Security in Africa. The Initiative will establish a framework for collaboration among African Governments and partners aimed at accelerating the implementation of their food and nutrition security policies on the ground.

In preparation for the twenty-second Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Marrakesh, we plan to play a convening role as the secretariat to the African Ministers Conference on the Environment, so as to further implement the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Two issues will be critical for Africa in Marrakesh: agriculture and energy.

Science, technology and innovation are at the forefront of NEPAD's efforts to achieve inclusive growth. We have bolstered our interventions in science, technology and innovation at the national, regional and continental levels with the main goal of embedding those critical tools in our efforts to achieve the goals of Agenda 2063 and the SDGs. We are continuing to seek out pioneering approaches towards industrialization and have taken the lead by establishing the Kaizen-Africa Initiative, which aims to improve productivity, quality and competitiveness of the private sector in Africa.

Skills development and employment for youth are also a current challenge for African countries in their efforts to promote economic development, growth and social stability. The lack of educational and meaningful economic opportunities forces many young people to search for a more prosperous future elsewhere. The NEPAD Agency, under the African Union Commission, is supported by Germany in the implementation of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training Programme. That programme promotes the occupational prospects of young Africans through the support of innovative skills-development programmes. We believe in attracting young people to the agriculture sector for sustained growth and job creation. NEPAD, through its Agriculture Technical and Vocational Education and Training programme, is partnering with the private sector to offer training along various stages of the agriculture value chains.

Before concluding, allow me to pay tribute to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who throughout his tenure championed energy through his initiative on Sustainable Energy for All. NEPAD continues to work with strategic partners, such as Power Africa, to make that laudable initiative a reality.

(*spoke in French*)

We would like to take this opportunity to extend our warm congratulations to the new Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. António Guterres, on his election. Similarly, I would like to congratulate Under-Secretary-General Maged Abdelaziz, the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Africa, for the efforts he has undertaken at the United Nations in order to ensure the Organization's ongoing interest in the continent. The great success of Africa Week is a testament to that interest. The African Union reaffirms that Africa is prepared to define its own fate, in partnership with the rest of the world. Regarding the universal implementation of the SDGs, Africa will focus on pragmatism and partnership. Agenda 2063 will be the operational instrument to that end.

The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.

United Nations A/71/PV.29

General Assembly

Seventy-first session

Official Records

29th plenary meeting
Friday, 14 October 2016, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Thomson ..... (Fiji)

In the absence of the President, Ms. Young (Belize), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda items 62 and 12 (*continued*)

New Partnership for Africa's Development: progress in implementation and international support

(a) New Partnership for Africa's Development: progress in implementation and international support

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/71/189 and A/71/203)

(b) Causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General (A/71/211)

2001-2010: Decade to Roll Back Malaria in Developing Countries, Particularly in Africa

Ms. Mamdani (Canada): One year ago (see A/70/PV.4), all 193 States Members of the United Nations gathered in this very Hall to adopt the historic 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a global framework that challenges all of us to create a prosperous, sustainable and equitable world within one generation. Canada commends the early efforts of many African countries to implement the 2030 Agenda and its ambitious set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), alongside the complementary aims of the African Union's Agenda 2063.

The 2030 Agenda is universal, and every country in the world must do its part to ensure that no one is left behind. I am proud to say that Canada is fully committed to supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at home and abroad. In fact, we are currently undertaking an international assistance review that will help to shape Canada's approach to implementation of the SDGs. As we look to revitalize our approach to development, I can say that we will invest our efforts in helping the poorest and most vulnerable, supporting fragile States and empowering women and girls to realize their full potential as active participants in and contributors to their societies.

It is clear, however, that investing in development alone is not enough. The theme of this year's Africa Week here at the United Nations, and indeed the frank and fruitful discussions that it has sparked, underscores the interrelated nature of development, governance and security, and the importance of addressing these issues together in order to achieve peace and prosperity in Africa. Canada is committed to supporting and partnering with African countries to help spur economic growth, promote effective governance, fight climate change and address key drivers of insecurity. For example, Canada recently announced its support for the African Institute for Mathematical Sciences, to contribute to the advancement of women in the fields of science and mathematics, strengthen the Institute's approach to combating climate change and establish a new centre of excellence in francophone Africa.

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We will continue to pursue mutually beneficial trade and investment opportunities, which can generate new revenues and jobs. And as a determined peacebuilder, we will take a more active role in helping to bring stability and security to the world. To that end, my Government has pledged to provide up to 600 Canadian armed forces personnel for possible deployment to United Nations peace operations. Canada also strongly supports regional integration and collaboration in Africa as a mechanism for achieving peace and stability, democratic governance, inclusive development and economic prosperity across the continent. In this regard, we are currently exploring ways to strengthen Canada's engagement with key continental and regional institutions, including the African Union.

Although it is clear that much work must be done to achieve our collective global goals, I would like to assure the Assembly that Canada will remain a strong and dynamic partner in our shared objective of promoting peace, development and prosperity for all of Africa.

Mr. Mminele (South Africa): South Africa would also like to pay tribute to the memory of His Excellency Mr. Girma Asmerom Tesfay, the late Ambassador of Eritrea to the United Nations.

South Africa aligns itself with the statements delivered this morning by the representatives of Thailand, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and the Niger, on behalf of the Group of African States (see A/71/PV.28).

From the outset, my delegation considers it important to highlight the fact that the African continent continues to contend with a variety of challenges, including poverty, high unemployment and continued rising inequality. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is an African-tailored strategic blueprint designed to contribute positively to African economies' active participation in the global economy. It is a deliberate corridor that we have developed to enhance regional economic cooperation and integration. We are pleased that over the years NEPAD has developed much-needed coherence in addressing challenges and exploiting opportunities through programmes that promote economic development, inclusive industrial development and policies aimed at improving productive capacities in Africa. We have no doubt that such coherence will naturally complement efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Nonetheless, we are aware that finding the financing for efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda remains a challenge. Official development assistance (ODA) is therefore still a major source of financing for development, particularly for countries most in need and especially in Africa, but aid alone is not enough to address development challenges and ultimately eradicate poverty in all its forms and dimensions. In that regard, we urge the international community to support Africa's efforts to curb the illicit financial flows that continue to hamper the continent's endeavours to generate innovative sources of funding, including mobilizing domestic resources. Tackling that issue, and combining such efforts with international support, would enable Africa to reduce its reliance on ODA.

We are convinced that if Africa is to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, it needs greater foreign direct investment (FDI), given the critical role that such investment plays in achieving such development objectives as inclusive economic growth. FDI creates jobs and therefore helps to eradicate poverty and hunger. We would like to emphasize how urgent it is to advance sustainable industrialization in Africa as a key element in diversifying economies, adding value, building productive capacities and creating jobs, thus eradicating poverty on the continent. We therefore urge the international community and the relevant United Nations entities to scale up their support in order to ensure that Africa's industrialization and infrastructure development programmes are fully implemented.

The African Regional Economic Communities have an important role to play in the implementation of NEPAD and the African Union's Agenda 2063, and particularly its first 10-year implementation plan, in close collaboration and cooperation with the African Union (AU). We would therefore like to encourage African countries and the international community to give the Regional Economic Communities the support they need to strengthen their capacity. Undoubtedly, Agenda 2063, as the overarching homegrown strategy for Africa's socioeconomic transformation over the next few decades, can lead Africa towards a greater future to the benefit of her people.

In the light of the importance of enhancing the African Union's ability to meet the challenges of development, peace and security, we would like to

underscore the importance of fully implementing its 10-year capacity-building programme. We also welcome the ongoing efforts to formulate the programme's successor, since it expires this year. And we want to welcome and acknowledge the progress that has been made by African countries, the AU and subregional organizations in the areas of conflict prevention, peacemaking, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and development.

Lastly, despite major progress on the issue, the African continent continues to bear the brunt of the problem of malaria. In that regard, we must improve health-care systems and be able to bridge the gaps that continue to undermine African countries' efforts to gain access to effective interventions and therefore impede efforts to control and eliminate the disease.

Mr. Bultrikov (Kazakhstan): I would first like to join others in expressing our deep sorrow at the passing of the Permanent Representative of Eritrea, His Excellency Mr. Girma Asmerom Tesfay, and to extend our sincere condolences and deep sympathy to his family and the Government and the people of Eritrea.

We take note that Africa Week 2016, on the theme "Strengthening partnerships for inclusive sustainable development, good governance, peace and stability in Africa", took place this week in the context of the first year of implementation of both the historic 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063. Today, in this forum, we are also focusing on Africa's development priorities, which cover the areas of peace, security, governance, human rights and social, economic and environmental development.

Africa will undoubtedly be one of the principal engines of economic growth in the twenty-first century, as can be seen by its remarkable progress so far. With a show of unity, we need to help Africa to overcome the vulnerabilities that result from such progress. Regional and national development plans must be made to be fully responsive to both the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2063.

Kazakhstan and the African States share common aspirations in terms of security and stability, including the eradication of poverty and economic inequality and the promotion of people-centred development for durable peace. Over the past decade, foundations have been laid for a long-term future partnership with respect to investment opportunities and the broader economy, as well as in the political and cultural fields. Moreover, our two tracks of development have moved in parallel with the same trajectory. As the African Union (AU) started to implement its ambitious Agenda 2063, my country launched the Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy. Both are focused on people-centred development and have the potential to share many best practices and lessons learned.

Kazakhstan is deeply committed to Africa, which is a very high priority in our foreign policy due to its importance as an emerging continent. At the United Nations and in all other multilateral regional and national forums, my country has constantly called for a strengthening of AU structures and instruments, increasingly deepening thereby its commitment to Africa. Over the past 10 years, Africa has become the second-fastest-growing region in the world, with an average annual growth rate of 5.1 per cent, which is the result of greater political stability and economic reforms. Kazakhstan will therefore support all of Africa's efforts aimed at growth and work closely with the region, with the deep conviction that it should also develop ethically. With that in mind, we will see that, over time, no one is left behind.

Today, partnerships between developing nations are not a choice, but are instead a key and effective way to protect our common security and address pressing development challenges. The many obstacles Africa faces include pockets of poverty, unemployment among young people and the threat of climate change, all of which are perils that many Member States will also not be able to avoid. The largest number of least developed countries and landlocked developing countries are in Africa and require special attention. Africa therefore needs innovative policymaking and policy implementation, as well as a rethinking of both economic development strategies and the manner in which economic, social and environmental policies are conceived.

Kazakhstan strongly believes that we must ensure that Africa does not suffer from unfair and unjust global trade policies, tariffs and subsidies, which impede its ongoing progress, and has been a proponent of this issue at the United Nations and other forums. Like the rest of the world, Africa also needs peace and stability, which are the bedrock of development. Kazakhstan has therefore introduced a new development approach to eliminating the threat of war by calling for agreement on a 2045 global strategic initiative plan to be achieved

by the United Nations centenary, as presented last year to the General Assembly by our President, Mr. Nursultan Nazarbayev (see A/70/PV.13). The aim of this plan is to foster global development based on fair conditions, where all nations have equal access to global infrastructure, resources and markets, and where comprehensive accountability for human development is maintained.

Capacity-building and technology transfer are crucial. Kazakhstan is therefore committed to promoting greater South-South collaboration both in Central Asia and far beyond its borders. South-South collaboration is the most vivid example of mutually beneficial partnership. Developing countries are turning to one another for lessons on innovative policies and schemes to address pressing development challenges. We stand ready to share the solutions that have successfully worked for us with other developing nations. Despite our status as the largest landlocked country in the world, Kazakhstan has amassed immense experience in achieving dynamic economic growth, which has resulted in remarkable structural transformation.

Partnership and solidarity are the bases for sustainable development at all levels. One of our major joint projects is the third-party cost-sharing agreement with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which is aimed at implementing the Africa-Kazakhstan partnership for sustainable development, and which we believe will further strengthen our bonds of cooperation. In addition, we also have a well-established large-scale project that trains African professionals at Kazakh institutions of higher learning in the fields of agriculture, health care, technology and the oil and gas industries.

Kazakhstan recognizes that gender equality and the empowerment of women are among the most critical goals for our world, and we are determined to contribute to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women across the world. With that in mind, we sponsored the interim report on the African Women's Decade 2010-2020 and the report of Her Excellency Ms. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, and the heads of AU member States, on the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa.

The new paradigm and transformational shift will require enormous resources. At the opening of Africa Week, my Ambassador reiterated our President's initiative that proposes that each State consider allocating a mere 1 per cent of its defence budget to the UNDP Trust Fund for Sustainable Social Development, Peace and Support to Countries in Special Situations. In this regard, we would underline that on 1 November 2016, the missions of Kazakhstan and Belarus will organize a brainstorming session on cross-cutting First and Second Committee issues, under the theme "Responsible governance on disarmament and non-proliferation for progress and sustainable development". A formal invitation will be extended to members soon; in the meantime, I would like to take this opportunity to invite members of the Assembly to participate in the event.

The harsh and devastating realities of climate change for African countries are well known and documented. Kazakhstan is showcasing renewable sources of energy at the international exhibition Astana Expo-2017 on the theme of the energy of the future, which is extremely relevant to developing countries. We will arrange financing for participation of a number of representatives from developing countries in special situations, including from Africa.

The foregoing are some of the numerous meaningful projects that we have embarked upon bilaterally and multilaterally, but time constraints do not allow for me to elaborate on them further. However, I would like to reiterate our deep commitment to Africa's peace and prosperity, as evidenced by the many embassies we have set up and the partnerships we have built with our African partners. Kazakhstan is proud to be one of the continent's strongest collaborators and allies.

Mr. Tommo Monthe (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): Our Eritrean colleague has passed away. At the outset, let me reiterate the condolences I sent yesterday to his Mission and staff and to the Government and the people of Eritrea. May his soul rest in eternal peace.

Today's debate is taking place at the conclusion of an intense round of activities within the framework of Africa Week, which began on Monday, 10 October. I would like to begin by expressing my country's appreciation for the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa; the African Union (AU); Mr. Mayaki, Chief Executive Officer of the Planning and Coordinating Agency for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD); and all of those who, through their institutions, work tirelessly for the development of Africa.

After the so-called lost decade of the eighties, marked by deep pessimism, our continent has once again found its strength and vigour. Africa is on the move — towards the horizon of 2063, where it will be a peaceful, strong and prosperous Africa that is a major player in international relations; on course to implementing the strategic orientations leading to that horizon; and in pursuit of specific goals it has set based on its own perspective and experiences. Our continent hopes its bilateral and multilateral partners will support it on this path, working actively for and with it.

On the political level, the cessation of hostilities is on the horizon for 2020, with peace, security, the fight against terrorists such as the Boko Haram sect, good governance, deepened democratic roots and the rule of law, as well as respect for human rights — are some of the goals that we have set and that we are actively pursuing with strong political will in countries on the continent, despite the difficulties that can crop up. It is ancient African cultural tradition not to leave anyone behind. My country, Cameroon, has taken determined steps along this path.

At the economic and social levels, Cameroon, which is a member of the NEPAD Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee, draws upon the major programmes on infrastructure, industrialization, energy, agriculture, health, research, innovation and technology — all of which NEPAD and Africa have put at the very centre of Africa's transformation.

With regard to infrastructure, in January the African Heads of State approved the strategy to establish the Dakar Agenda for Action, dedicated to actions to finance infrastructure in Africa, through mechanisms to provide services and programmes for development infrastructure in Africa. These various projects and programmes are intended to strengthen support for public-private partnerships on the continent, as well as for other development players, so as to guarantee the mobilization of financing and investments in the 16 priority regional infrastructure projects.

With respect to industrialization, my delegation believes that it is indispensable to the structural transformations of African economies to ensure that these transformations produce added value and economic diversification. In the context of globalization and economic change, industrialization is no doubt the means to enable our continent to create inclusive and sustainable economic growth that will generate productive jobs to free millions of people from poverty. That is why the implementation of the Action Plan for Accelerated Industrial Development of Africa, adopted in March 2011, constitutes, in our opinion, an essential element for Africa's transformation.

At the level of institutions and the national infrastructure responsible for implementing NEPAD, to which my country subscribes, my Government has adopted measures to integrate NEPAD priorities into our national development programmes. For example, I would cite the adoption, in accordance with the detailed agricultural development programme in Africa, of our national agricultural investment plan, the purpose of which is to invest more than $6 billion for development in the agricultural sector for the 2014-2020 period. Likewise, in the area of health, Cameroon has been involved in a project to train professional nurses and midwives in Africa with a view to improving the qualifications of nurses and midwives and to bring them up to university and professional masters levels. In considering the domains of science, technology and innovation, I would mention the role my country plays within the framework of the consolidated action plan, which includes initiatives to improve African indicators for science, technology and innovation, fields in which Cameroon is a pioneer.

Before I turn to the Roll Back Malaria Partnership, I would like to talk about climate change. On that matter, the massive forested areas of Central Africa, the second lung of the planet, the drying up of Lake Chad and desertification deserve all the attention they can get from the international community. The same holds true for the seas and oceans and space, including outer space. In these areas, Africa has developed programmes and projects that must be supported, for example, the project related to our common position on the seas and oceans and the pan-African space project.

(*spoke in English*)

With respect to the Roll Back Malaria Partnership, the Government of Cameroon specially commends the substantial contribution made by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, which continues to provide two thirds of the international contributions in the fight against malaria. Cameroon is delighted with the admission of Cameroon to Round 9 of financing and the receipt of a 64 billion CFA francs as a grant in the fight against HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. From 2008 to 2013, malaria-related sickness decreased

among pregnant women, children under the age of 5 and the general population. These reductions were mainly the result of malaria-control initiatives launched in the country and fully or partially funded by the Global Fund partnership.

Faced with that overwhelming reality, the Government of Cameroon welcomes the development of the global technical strategy for malaria 2016-2030 adopted by the World Health Assembly in May 2015, which provided a technical framework for all epidemic countries as they work towards controlling and eliminating malaria. The grants provided for combating malaria promote access to a greater level of care in health facilities and at home.

Today, an adult can be treated properly for a malaria attack for less than 300 CFA francs, or €0.50. The improvement of the national strategy for the treatment of malaria has involved the following recommendations from the World Health Organization, namely, the confirmation of stocks of artemisinin combination therapy (ACT) protocol to avoid an imbalance in inventory management and errors in forecasts with a view to facilitating a rapid response. Community volunteers have been trained since 2008 for distributing ACT to homes and, through the support of the Fund, some 800,000 rapid diagnostic tests were distributed throughout the country, providing a reliable diagnostic result in the shortest time possible.

In the area of prevention, vector control was strengthened. The launch in August 2011 of the campaign, known as Knock Out Malaria, involved the free distribution of approximately 9 million mosquito nets in all regions of the country. The Government of Cameroon and the Global Fund reaffirmed their partnership by signing a new malaria grant agreement in the amount of €77 million on 18 February 2015. The grant will fund the distribution of 15.8 million mosquito nets, including a mass-distribution campaign that will strive to achieve universal coverage in Cameroon.

In that regard, in June 2016, 12 million treated mosquito nets with a lifespan of two years were distributed. The distribution of these long-lasting treated mosquito nets is part of a campaign to reach out and maintain universal coverage in the fight against malaria through sustainable-impact interventions from 2015 to 2017. The joint effort of the Cameroon Government and its international partners is aimed at knocking out malaria, which is considered one of the most fatal diseases on the African continent.

The campaign features an awareness-raising programme enlisting the media, including local radio and television artists, telephone marketers and celebrities, to get out the message. The campaign is expected to achieve the objective of "one household, one net", which would exceed the current level of coverage, which is 19 per cent. The campaign was expected to accelerate outcomes and scale up the malaria-control programme, in order to eradicate malaria at the national level in the period 2011-2015 and significantly affect morbidity and mortality rates by the end of 2015.

(*spoke in French*)

I will conclude with the following remarks. As the President of my country, His Excellency Mr. Paul Biya, underscored from this rostrum on 23 September (see A/71/PV.14), while the task of achieving the sustainable development of Africa is complex and difficult, it is also exhilarating. Numerous statements have already been made on this topic. Many plans of action have been adopted. What is lacking, however, is the active implementation of such projects, statements and plans of action. What is missing is the determined action and the will to realize on the ground what we have jointly decided, sometimes decades ago.

(*spoke in English*)

Ultimately, we shall match our words with our deeds.

Mr. Chinyonga (Zambia): I would like to begin by conveying my country's condolences upon the death of the Permanent Representative of Eritrea, His Excellency Mr. Girma Asmerom Tesfay.

I would also like to associate my statement with those made by the representative of Thailand on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by the representative of the Niger on behalf of the Group of African States (see A/71/PV.28).

My delegation remains convinced that trade, infrastructure development, a conflict-free Africa, gender equality, women's empowerment, health care and education remain key among Africa's priority development areas.

We reiterate the importance of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa, which the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)

developed, focusing on transformative regional projects. Out of the priority regional infrastructure projects identified, Zambia is likely to benefit directly from those that are located or cross its borders, including a project for a 614-kilometre road extending from Serenje to Nakonde, an information-and-communications-technology terrestrial fibre-optic cable extending from Lusaka to the capital of Malawi, Lilongwe, the Zambia-Tanzania-Kenya transmission line and a hydropower project.

Furthermore, Zambia remains committed to enhancing agriculture and food security. To this end, my country has incorporated the NEPAD Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme through the implementation of the national agriculture investment plan for the period from 2014 to 2018, which advocates for the poor and emphasizes agriculturally led economic development. Consequently, over 3 million farmers in Zambia are expected to benefit from 17 different categories of climate-smart technologies and practices. I am further pleased to report that Zambia developed a compendium of climate-oriented agriculture technologies in all three of its agro-ecological regions, which was facilitated through the support from the NEPAD Climate Change Fund, for mainstreaming climate-smart agriculture into the national agriculture-investment plan.

With regard to the achieving healthier lives, Zambia will give priority to disease prevention and the promotion of healthy lifestyles, as well as the strengthening of immunization programmes, adopting the target of covering every child in every part of the country. Zambia is also giving priority to working towards reducing malaria-related deaths countrywide and achieving a malaria-free Zambia by 2020. Thus far, the prevalence of malaria and deaths from the disease have steadily decreased, culminating in an impressive 55 per cent reduction in all cases of child mortality.

In order to sustain that progress in moving towards the 2020 target, we need to step up the implementation of the malaria-elimination strategy. Zambia is also proactively strengthening its health systems through the implementation of the Zambia health-systems improvement project, which is being piloted in 5 of the 10 provinces across the country. It is envisioned that the lessons to be learned from the project will be a basis for future improvements to our health system.

Zambia is committed to promoting human-capital development, as it remains a key priority for Africa. To this end, Zambia will continue to improve the teaching of science and mathematics, which is critical to attaining improvements in technology and innovation for enhanced industrialization and job creation. Zambia will further continue to reduce the mismatch between skills development and the needs of the labour market.

With respect to national interventions on gender equality and women's empowerment, Zambia enacted the Gender Equity and Equality Act of 2015, which fully incorporated into our domestic legislation the major international and regional instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development. The Act also seeks to attain gender equity and equality through the integration of women and men in national development processes.

The financing for the development conference held in Addis Ababa in July 2015 took place at a critical time in the consideration of the global financing system needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Zambia therefore welcomes the conclusion of a tripartite agreement between the NEPAD Agency, the World Bank and the SADC Secretariat, with the aim of providing financial and technical support for implementing SADC regional programmes.

In conclusion, I wish to mention that my delegation notes that the process of integrating NEPAD into the African Union structures and processes has been slow, despite the work of the African Union Commission and the NEPAD Agency to this end. It is our view that international support would be useful to facilitate establishing the timelines for concluding the matter. Notwithstanding all this, Zambia remains fully committed to ensuring that the priority areas of energy, industrialization, intraregional trade, food security, health care, education, gender equality and adaptation to climate change are fast-tracked under NEPAD.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on these items.

The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 62 and its sub-items (a) and (b) and agenda item 12.

Agenda item 115 *(continued)*

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(h) Appointment of members of the Joint Inspection Unit

Note by the Secretary-General (A/71/396)

The Acting President: As indicated in document A/71/396, which the General Assembly has before it, Inspector George Bartsiotas (United States of America) was appointed by the General Assembly on 26 July 2012 for a five-year term of office, beginning on 1 January 2013 and expiring on 31 December 2017. On 14 March 2016, George Bartsiotas submitted his resignation, effective 30 September 2016, to the Chair of the Joint Inspection Unit, in accordance with article 4, paragraph 3, of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit.

In accordance with article 4, paragraph 5, of the statute, the Chair of the Unit notified the Secretary-General of the vacancy. As a result of the resignation, the General Assembly is required, during the seventy-first session, to appoint a member to fill the vacancy in the Joint Inspection Unit. It is further stated in the note by the Secretary-General that, in accordance with article 4, paragraph 2, of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, the person so appointed will hold office for the remainder of that term, provided that it is not less than three years. Otherwise, the duration of the appointment is to be for a full term. In this regard, and in order for consultations to be held, as stipulated in article 3, the Assembly may wish to consider filling the vacancy for a term of office beginning on 1 January 2017 and expiring on 31 December 2021.

In this connection, may I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to fill this vacancy for a term of office beginning on 1 January 2017 and expiring on 31 December 2021?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: As also indicated in document A/71/396, in accordance with article 3, paragraph 1, of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, the President of the General Assembly shall consult with Member States to draw up a list of countries, in this case, one country, which would be requested to propose a candidate for appointment to the Joint Inspection Unit.

As further indicated in paragraph 3 of document A/71/396, the General Assembly, by its resolution 61/238, of 22 December 2006, decided that, beginning on 1 January 2008, the President of the General Assembly, when drawing up a list of countries, in accordance with article 3, paragraph 1, of the statute of the Unit, will invite Member States to submit the names of the countries and their respective candidates simultaneously, on the understanding that the candidates submitted were the candidates that the respective Member States intended to propose, to the extent possible, for appointment by the Assembly, in accordance with article 3, paragraph 2, of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit.

After holding the necessary consultations, I should like to communicate to the Assembly the information received from the Chair of the Group of Western European and other States that the Group has endorsed the United States of America to propose a candidate for the vacancy from among the Western European and other States. In accordance with article 3, paragraph 1, of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit and with resolution 61/238, the United States of America will be requested to submit the name of a candidate and the curriculum vitae highlighting the candidate's relevant qualifications for the task.

I would like to remind members that, in accordance with Assembly resolution 59/267, of 23 December 2004, the candidates should have experience in at least one of the following fields: oversight, audit, inspection, investigation, evaluation, finance, project evaluation, programme evaluation, human-resources management, management, public administration, monitoring and/or programme performance, as well as knowledge of the United Nations system and its role in international relations.

After holding the appropriate consultations described in article 3, paragraph 2, of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, including consultations with the President of the Economic and Social Council and with the Secretary-General in his capacity as Chair of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, I will submit the name of the candidate to the Assembly for appointment.

As indicated in the schedule of the plenary meetings contained in document A/INF/71/3, delegations are reminded that the appointment of the members of the Joint Inspection Unit has been scheduled for the morning of Thursday, 10 November.

We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of sub-item (h) of agenda item 115.

The meeting rose at 4 p.m.

United Nations A/71/PV.30

General Assembly
Seventy-first session

Official Records

30th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 19 October 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Thomson ..... (Fiji)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda items 68

Promotion and protection of human rights

(a) Implementation of human rights instruments

Commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

The President: Fifty years ago, the General Assembly made a historic advancement in our efforts to promote and protect human rights across our globe through the adoption of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. This landmark achievement built upon the commitments of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by legally obligating States, for the first time, to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights inherent in each and every individual.

In the 50 years since their adoption, the International Covenants have become cornerstones of both international law and the international human rights framework, based upon the fundamental recognition of the universality, indivisibility and independent nature of human rights. Across our world, they have helped to shape constitutions, laws, policies and justice systems. They have had a transformative effect on the lives of people across the globe. This has been so because the power of the International Covenants resides in their ability to protect universal rights and freedoms in diverse circumstances and situations. And the expert committees that are upholding the implementation of the International Covenants have ensured that their provisions continue to frame our policy responses to a complex and rapidly changing world.

Despite the great progress we have made, we live in times when people across our world are being denied their most fundamental human rights. Violent extremism is on the rise and waves of intolerance and hate are targeting minorities, migrants and our most vulnerable. Greater restrictions are being placed on our most basic rights and freedoms, including the rights to life, liberty and security; equality before the law; to gender equality, education and health; to freedom of expression, worship and association and to freedom from discrimination, torture, slavery and hunger. Today's commemoration is a timely reminder of the power of these Covenants to ensure that States uphold the rights of all their people.

As Governments, civil society and the global public focus on ramping up implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the mutually reinforcing nature of the pillars of human rights, peace and security and development could not be clearer. When people's human rights are violated, when they live in fear, when they are affected by conflict and violence, when they are subject to discrimination, marginalization, intolerance, poverty and corruption, neither sustainable development nor sustainable peace is attainable.

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16-33261 (E)

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The 2030 Agenda is premised on the fundamental recognition of human rights for all. In taking a comprehensive and integrated approach to development, the 2030 Agenda encapsulates the indivisibility and interdependence of the human rights set forth in both Covenants. An effective implementation of the Agenda requires that this be done in a manner consistent with the United Nations Charter, international treaties and international law. Done the right way, work to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the Human Rights Covenants will have to proceed hand in hand.

Indeed, the mantra of the 2030 Agenda of leaving no one behind recalls the principles of non-discrimination and equality that underlie the two Covenants. Sustainable Development Goal 16 — promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice and effective and accountable institutions — is fundamental to achieving success under all of the Sustainable Development Goals.

I call on all Member States that have yet to ratify either or both Covenants to take the opportunity of this commemorative year to do so. The promotion and protection of human rights is a commitment that requires constant vigilance by us all. Allow me here to quote John Donne's celebrated verse:

"Any man's death diminishes me,

because I am involved in mankind,

And therefore never send to know for whom

the bell tolls; it tolls for thee."

These words ring as true today as when they were written 400 years ago. Let us therefore mark the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Covenants by reaffirming our commitment to realizing the rights of all people, protecting those who are suffering injustice, fighting xenophobia, intolerance and discrimination, promoting equality and empowerment and increasing global awareness and understanding of human rights as fundamental to all lives. There is much we can do better in our efforts to realize political, economical and social rights of mankind. And in doing so, we will do well to aim for greater respect and stronger implementation of the two Covenants we celebrate today.

I now give the floor to the Deputy Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Jan Eliasson.

The Deputy Secretary-General: I am honoured to join the members of the Assembly today in marking a truly momentous occasion and to convey a message of support from Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

Half a century ago, the General Assembly adopted the two International Human Rights Covenants, completing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to form the International Bill of Human Rights. This marked the beginning of a global constitution of human rights protection. The adoption galvanized the consensus view that the protection and realization of human rights is fundamental to building resilient, inclusive and peaceful societies, as the President just stated. The Covenants have inspired international human rights instruments and influenced national constitutions the world over. They have guided national and regional courts and provided a normative foundation for the work of national independent human rights institutions. They have confirmed a common universal language of human rights, at the heart of which remains the right to life. The abolition of the death penalty has advanced significantly, but we must step up our efforts towards ending this inhumane practice of executions once and for all.

On another level, the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights remind States parties to the two Covenants that they have to account publicly for their human rights performance. The Committees are crucial for the support and guidance of States in their implementation of human rights. They also help victims in many countries to seek remedies when rights are breached. Our aim must be the universal ratification of the Covenants, including the right of petition under their Optional Protocols and their full and effective realization for all people.

Regrettably, serious human rights violations remain a huge challenge. I refer here to all human rights: political, civil, economic, social and cultural. I think of protecting civil liberties in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism; of preventing famine; of upholding social protection even in troubled economic times; of respecting religious freedom, tolerance and freedom from discrimination for all, including migrants; of shielding everyone from all forms of violence, especially women and children; and of creating space for free speech, for free media and for human rights defenders to act without intimidation.

In a world of widespread suffering, war, poverty and discrimination, the fiftieth anniversary is an appropriate moment to rally around the Covenants'

principles and vision. The Covenants remind us how the carnage stemming from conflict and blatant disrespect for human rights and humanitarian law is utterly inexcusable. They admonish us to never accept extreme poverty, intolerance, inequality or injustices.

We have more knowledge, tools and even resources now than ever before. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides us with a global blueprint to implement the Covenants in a broader and deeper sense. The Covenants in turn support stronger accountability in respect of the Sustainable Development Goals. In parallel, the United Nations Human Rights Up Front initiative aims to enhance the ability of the United Nations system to prevent and respond in a timely fashion to serious human rights violations before they turn into mass atrocities, as we have seen occur in so many cases.

All human rights are universal, interrelated, inalienable and indivisible. They form the bedrock of a humane world. Let us reaffirm this vision and turn it into realities in all corners of the world. Let us pledge to strengthen our political commitment to the Covenants: to guarantee freedom from fear and freedom from want and to protect human rights for all.

The President: I thank the Deputy Secretary-General for his statement.

Before proceeding further, I should like to consult members with a view to inviting the following speakers to make statements on this occasion, as mentioned in my letter dated 6 October 2016: Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; Mr. Fabian Omar Salvioli, Chair of the Human Rights Committee; and Mr. Waleed Sadi, Chair of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

If there is no objection, may I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly, without setting a precedent, to invite these speakers to make statements at this commemorative meeting?

It was so decided

The President: In accordance with the decision just taken, I now give the floor to Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Mr. Al Hussein (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights): Half a century ago, our forebears in this Assembly unanimously adopted two great covenants and brought the force of law to the principles laid out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Those covenants distilled the bitter lessons learnt from warfare, genocide, colonial oppression and economic devastation into a legal code, creating a blueprint to build a different, more just and peaceful world.

Perhaps never in the history of the United Nations has it been so important to recall that the human rights principles embodied in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights provide the foundation on which to build justice, prosperity and peace, both among and within nations; on which to build opportunities and ensure that every individual and every society can develop to their full potential; and on which to build justice and respect for diverse opinions, origins and faiths. At a time of deepening turmoil, with rising antagonism and increasingly callous disregard for the human suffering generated by conflict and deprivation, we can take stock of the world we have built as a result of these binding agreements, their fundamental wisdom and humanity and their promise of a safer, fairer future. We can fulfil their pledge.

All the world's people have a right to life and to be free of torture, slavery and discrimination. They have a right to freedom of religion, freedom of speech and freedom of assembly. They have electoral rights and the right to a fair trial. They have a right to education, to an adequate standard of living, to fair wages and to safe working conditions. They have a right to decent housing, to the highest attainable standard of health, and to adequate protection when they are vulnerable by virtue of age, sickness or accident. These are not empty words, but rights. Every State represented in this Hall has sworn to be accountable to its people in ensuring these rights are respected. They are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. They are interlocking, and the societies they build are resilient and strong.

The Covenants have been a lifeline for millions of women, men and children over the past 50 years. They have helped to shape the constitutions of many nations represented in this Hall, and they are deeply grounded in their laws. They have taught us to turn away from discrimination, whether based on race, gender, ethnicity, religious faith, political opinion, sexual orientation or any other characteristic. They have shown us how to build rule-of-law institutions that are impartial, transparent and accessible. They have demonstrated

that policy can be securely anchored in the expressed will of the people when there is greater freedom.

The Covenants continue to bear fruit. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change both draw deeply from their power — the drive to end discrimination on any grounds and to build governance that is grounded in civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

This structure of law and principle is our most precious inheritance from past generations, and it is the most valuable legacy we can pass on to our children. Dag Hammarskjöld said:

"To build for man a world without fear, we must be without fear. To build a world of justice, we must be just."

He also said:

> "The pursuit of peace and progress, with its trials and its errors, its successes and its setbacks, can never be relaxed and never abandoned."

Will it be our generation that breaks away from the human rights principles drawn up to save the world from the horror of the past? Will it be we who set off that return to injustice, hate, war, imperialism and the exploitive and oppressive exercise of naked power? In a tide of hatred and divisiveness, deep and vital principles may be swept away unheeded. The world's States cannot durably address poverty, climate change, migration, conflicts or terrorism without effective international cooperation in a system that upholds human dignity and equality. There will be no peace, development, safety or future if we ignore the rights of the people — all the world's people.

We cannot know what crises the next 50 years will bring. But when institutions do not protect the people or guard against injustice, or when they fail to share common resources equitably and safeguard the people's rights, social cohesion is shattered and the risk of division and violence is high. States can set our shared planet on a course of greater inclusion, more sustained prosperity and more justice, dignity, freedom and peace. States can embrace the voices of the people rather than cutting short that most precious resource.

The Covenants, through the excellent work of the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, continue to guide States and assist individuals in seeking remedies for violations. In today's troubled global context, the treaty body system is sorely needed. I encourage the Assembly to act on the recommendations of the Secretary-General in the report before us (A/71/118) in order to ensure that the treaty bodies can provide the most effective support possible.

Human rights offer States a path towards greater stability, not less. They ensure that disputes can be peacefully resolved, and they can build confidence, loyalty and thriving political and economic institutions. The most effective way to create societies that are cohesive and resilient is to build justice, dignity, equality and development, in a system that protects the full human rights of every individual.

The fiftieth anniversary of the Covenants must be an occasion to reaffirm our commitment to the International Bill of Human Rights, the great tripod of principle and commitment that is formed by the two Covenants and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Those texts are the bedrock of sound governance and in them lives the world's hope for peace.

The President: In accordance with the decision just taken, I now call on the Chair of the Human Rights Committee.

Mr. Salvioli (Human Rights Committee) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to commend you, Mr. President, and the General Assembly for the decision to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. I would also like to warmly thank the Deputy Secretary-General, my friend the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and my colleague Mr. Waleed Sadi, Chair of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Today's commemoration of the anniversary of the two International Covenants on Human Rights is a very significant moment in history. Half a century ago, in a moving meeting in this very Hall, we witnessed the adoption of both instruments and the first Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The then President of the General Assembly, in 1966, said with great clarity that universal respect for human rights is inseparable from the idea of world peace, that therefore the steps taken in the field of human rights must be made effective and that States should participate in the new Covenants universally and without reservations (see A/PV.1496). At the same

meeting the then Secretary-General stressed the fact that the two Covenants were approved unanimously, in a demonstration of the political maturity and positive leadership that existed at the time.

Fifty years have passed since then. As of today, 168 States have ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; 115 have ratified its first Optional Protocol, empowering the Human Rights Committee to receive, process and resolve individual communications; and 81 have ratified its second Optional Protocol, on the abolition of the death penalty. Those numbers are evidence of our progress and of States' growing willingnes to commit to civil and political rights.

Since 1977, the Human Rights Committee has been complying with its task of interpreting and applying the Covenant. Over those four decades, it has made a significant contribution to the case law on civil and political rights, thereby promoting the development of international human rights law to the benefit of individuals. By the process of reviewing the reports of States, the Committee, through its concluding observations, has carried out effective public scrutiny of legislation, policies and practices of the various State organs.

The Committee also interprets and applies the Covenant through its examination of individual communications. To date, it has received about 2,760 complaints and considered more than 1,150. The quality of the Committee's jurisprudence is recognized at every level and is taken into account by national, regional and international courts, including the International Court of Justice, which in its judgment in the *Diallo* case said that great weight should be given to the Committee's interpretation of the Covenant. Other bodies of independent experts, including the intergovernmental Human Rights Council, also use the documents that the Committee adopts to carry its work forward.

Throughout this period, we have been able to arrive at best practices for implementing our concluding observations and investigations, which have been greatly assisted by the Committee's follow-up procedures, the work of national human rights institutions and of course by civil society organizations. But none of that would be possible if we could not depend on the political will of the States.

The general comments, in which the Committee interprets the Covenant's provisions, documents that serve as a useful guide for States, are another important achievement. To date, we have adopted 35 general comments, and we are drafting a new one on the right to life, with broad participation by States and non-governmental organizations. Those achievements have been made possible by the excellent work that has been done by the women and men on the Committee, throughout its history and today, with expertise, commitment and outstanding quality. I would like to take this opportunity to express my admiration for them and to offer my sincere and heartfelt tribute and acknowledgement to my colleagues, past and present.

There are great challenges ahead of us in an enormously complex world. The International Covenants and the Committees' decisions represent an outstanding road map to a better future for our societies. It is urgent that we regain those values of interdependence and indivisibility and end our biased approaches to analysing social, civil, economic, political and cultural rights. In our judicial acts we must reject artificial categories and leave behind nineteenth-century principles. The guiding criteria for our actions should be a people-centred perspective and the full wealth of international human rights law. There is therefore no reason for not having universal ratification of the Covenants. States should become parties to them and their Protocols without delay or reservations.

States should submit reports on time; act in good faith in proceedings; encourage civil society's participation; and establish internal mechanisms for quick and effective compliance with the concluding observations and expert opinions of the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. They should propose the best-qualified people — expert, independent and impartial — as candidates for the Committees. Those qualities, along with equitable geographical distribution and gender balance, are the only ones that should guide the election process. States should actively support the work of the Committees, in word and deed, defend their impartiality and functions and provide the secretariats with the resources they need to fulfil their mandates.

It is decided, firm, permanent measures such as these, taken in every area, that are the best tribute to the International Covenants and to the people who had the foresight and the courage to formulate and adopt them. Using their expertise, the Committees must interpret and apply them with a view to achieving their universality, interdependence and indivisibility, while those here, the States Members of the United Nations,

have the great privilege of formulating and executing the public policy that can render them effective for the benefit of humankind.

The President: In accordance with the decision just taken, I now call on the Chair of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Mr. Sadi (Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights): We are assembled here today to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of two key human rights covenants: the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and its twin, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. I emphasize the word "twin" because I believe that ultimately they are inseparable.

The narrative of the adoption of the two basic human rights instruments shows beyond the shadow of a doubt — and we must not lose sight of the fact — that they complement one another, in every sense of the word, and that they were delivered in order to give full expression to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. The Declaration did not deal separately with the two dimensions of human rights, but rather jointly, affirming that for all intents and purposes the two Covenants are indeed inseparable. A close friend of mine once said that they are more or less like the two wings of the same bird, which cannot fly without both. I hope we can all remember that example, simple and yet to the point. Who are we to challenge this article of faith, which the Declaration embodied and espoused, that they are inseparable and indivisible?

We all now adhere faithfully to the proposition that human rights are interdependent and inseparable from one another. On that basis alone, the two Covenants, which aim to address civil and political rights in conjunction with economic, social and cultural rights, cannot fulfil their mandates separately from one another for much longer. Last summer, we made a modest move, with the two Committees meeting jointly, and I hope that modest move will be repeated vis-à-vis the other treaty bodies, because if we are faithful to the proposition that human rights are indivisible, we must pursue them in a joint, coordinated and cooperative manner. I am afraid that we are not yet on that road, but in the modest move we made last summer, our two Committees held hands and tried to see where they could have better coordination and cooperation.

We in the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights have repeatedly seen that the sets of rights that we are trying to promote and protect cannot be fully realized without taking into consideration their civil and political contexts. And I submit that that goes for every treaty body we have. They all have the same need for more coordination and cooperation. We have made a modest move in that direction, but I think we should do it faster and more boldly in the future. By way of example, one cannot enjoy the rights to food, work, housing, education, health and culture if one's political and civil environment is not adequate and conducive to their enjoyment. The denial of one set of rights will frustrate and impede the realization of and respect for the other sets.

I would like to take this opportunity to invite all countries that have not yet ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to do so. We have 164 member States. I would like to make a special appeal to the United States, which has almost alone stayed out of this club, and which I fear sends the wrong signal. I hope that through this forum, perhaps, the United States can be invited in. I hope the United States delegation is here this morning and can make an effort to join the rest of the international community in becoming a party to our treaty.

I hope today's commemoration will serve our ultimate purpose. My single and most important message is to urge that we have greater collaboration and cooperation between the two treaty bodies, because otherwise I believe we will be going in the wrong direction.

The President: I call on the representative of Kuwait, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait): I am honoured to speak today on behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States at our commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as called for in General Assembly resolution 70/144 under the agenda item entitled "Promotion and protection of human rights". Both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights are just as significant today as they were at their adoption in 1966.

The Covenants' foundation is the recognition that every human being has human rights, and that it is the obligation of each State to promote and preserve

those rights. Since their inception 50 years ago, both Covenants have continued to reflect ideals and goals that we have never ceased to desire to achieve. Moreover, given the continued conflicts going on around the world, resulting in a staggering total of 65.3 million refugees and internally displaced persons, we are currently facing the most challenging of struggles. Never has the desire for peace and security been so evident. All States are encouraged to implement the goals that both of these Covenants embody and to continue to aspire to a world free of fearand violence.

The fiftieth anniversary serves as a reminder of the obligation to protect and defend each individual's basic human rights and to commit to taking administrative and legislative measures to preserve those rights, as stated in the treaties, thereby reinforcing the aspirations of each and every human being to live in dignity, peace and security, as we all rightly deserve.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Georgia, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Mr. Imnadze (Georgia): It is my honour to take the floor on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States to join our voices in celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. These two Covenants, together with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, form a major cornerstone of international human rights law. We welcome the holding of this timely meeting to once again underscore the universal, inalienable, interdependent and indivisible nature of all human rights set forth in the Covenants.

The Eastern European States reaffirm their strong commitment to the Covenants, which represent an essential tool for the fulfilment of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all individuals. We recall the primary responsibility of States to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Fifty years ago, the Covenants set out the civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights that are the birthright of all human beings. During the past five decades, the world has dramatically changed. The increasing threats and pressing challenges facing us today — including the spread of international terrorism, racial, ethnic and religious intolerance and the migration crisis — once again underline the role of the international community in ensuring the better protection of human rights.

Today, as we reflect on the significant progress achieved since the adoption of the Covenants, we have to note that challenges remain in securing basic human rights and freedoms for all. Millions of people, especially children, women and persons with disabilities, continue to suffer from various forms of violence, discrimination, exploitation and abuse. Thousands still suffer from grave human rights violations during conflicts, and in that regard, we use this opportunity to underline the importance of the work of the relevant treaty bodies, such as the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

We strongly believe that every individual deserves to enjoy both sets of rights covered by the Covenants without any discrimination on any ground, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Special attention should be paid to the most vulnerable groups.

We share the view that the fundamental human rights enshrined in the Covenants should be applied equally to everyone. We need to take more effective steps to protect the human rights of all, and this landmark occasion gives us an opportunity to call on all States to ensure the universal ratification and effective implementation of both Covenants. In that regard, we appreciate the year-long "Our Rights, Our Freedoms, Always" campaign of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to promote and raise awareness on both Covenants.

As we embark on the ambitious 15-year journey towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it is important that we strive to achieve its goals as a major factor contributing to the promotion of human rights, including through the implementation of States' obligations under the Covenants.

On behalf of the Eastern European States, we would like to once again reiterate our strong commitment to ensuring the full protection of all human rights.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Chile, who will speak on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean States.

Mr. Barros Melet (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Group of Latin American and Caribbean States (GRULAC), on whose behalf I am speaking, is particularly pleased to participate in this fiftieth-anniversary commemoration of the adoption by the General Assembly of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Those instruments, together with the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights treaties, set out the essential foundation of the rights and fundamental freedoms to be enjoyed by all human beings simply because they are human.

The International Covenants on Human Rights have achieved global significance and relevance. They reinforce the universal, indivisible, interdependent and mutually supportive nature of all human rights. Respect for and the promotion and implementation of those instruments is a primary duty of every State party, and a source of legitimate interest to the international community. Their implementation requires and benefits from a cooperative approach that can be fostered by universal and regional human rights systems, particularly as regards building and strengthening the capacities needed to make progress in their compliance.

Human rights are recognized as one of the three basic pillars of the United Nations and are closely and directly linked to development and international peace and security. There are all too many examples demonstrating that a serious and systematic pattern of human rights violations can undermine international peace and stability, and that if we do not ensure and defend the dignity of all persons without exception in the face of violence, intolerance and exclusion, we will undermine efforts to effectively guarantee the rights enshrined in the International Human Rights Covenants and the work of the organs responsible for monitoring their implementation.

The International Covenants on Human Rights respond to the conviction that peace is very difficult to maintain or achieve without a decent standard of living for all commensurate with human dignity. We recognize that through those international instruments it is of the utmost importance to protect the right to life and personal integrity, promote individual economic security, and ensure that everyone can enjoy all their fundamental freedoms as elements of paramount importance to personal and social development. This means that poverty, inequality and inadequate access to food, health, education, housing and justice deprive people of the opportunity to develop their full potential.

In that conviction, the countries of Latin American and Caribbean place equal emphasis on the critical importance of all civil, political, economic, social and cultural human rights, and on the concomittant duty of all States to respect and promote them, allocating the resources necessary to build peaceful and inclusive societies that ensure prosperity and peace. In that regard, we also emphasize that the right to development is an integral part of the human rights corpus, for which our Organization must work tirelessly.

That vision is reflected in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted last year, which incorporates a human rights-based approach and recognizes the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights treaties as a cross-cutting element essential to balanced attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals, which were established in order to leave no one behind.

Now that our world is strongly interconnected as a result of development, progress, science, transportation and information technologies, States must work with all relevant stakeholders — including civil society organizations, businesses, academia and national human rights institutions, among others — in order to build a better response to common human rights challenges. A shared commitment to enhancing these universally recognized human rights for all is therefore essential.

In the same vein, one priority for GRULAC is and will continue to be to provide assistance and implement measures to effectively protect and promote the human rights of vulnerable persons and groups so as to fully realize all rights enshrined in the International Covenants and other international human rights instruments, paying particular attention to the empowerment of women and girls, the promotion of gender equality, and the rights of children, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, people of African descent, migrants and the elderly, among others, in order to ensure that all human beings can live in a region and a world with greater equality, justice, security and well-being.

Despite the magnitude of the challenges that we face on this anniversary, the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean renew their determination

and their profound commitment as they pursue this noble endeavour.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Mr. Wilson (United Kingdom): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary since the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights were conceived and 40 years since they entered into force. In conjunction with the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the Covenants marked a turning point in the formal recognition by States of the rights of the individual, that every person is born with equal rights — civil, political, cultural, economic and social — and should be able to exercise those rights without fear of persecution or oppression.

The anniversary of the Covenants is a time to take stock of the global human rights situation and to join our common efforts. In too many States human rights are under threat, and the fight against terrorism or cultural relativism is used to justify human rights violations. In that context, our responsibility is to defend the universality of human rights enshrined in the international treaties that we uphold.

The significance of the Covenants is self evident. Today, the most unstable and insecure regions around the globe are those where the principles enshrined in both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights are either neglected or opposed, where inequality and prejudice are most prominent and where oppression is rife. People expect accountability from their Governments and freedom and dignity for themselves. We must work together — national Governments, international organizations and civil society — to protect and strengthen human rights. Let us also consider how we work with Governments that are yet to sign or ratify the Covenants.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights remain as important today as when they were adopted. We are committed to working to ensure that those rights continue to be upheld and that we hold ourselves and each other to the highest possible standard. That can be achieved only through deeper cooperation with one another, with civil society and with the accountability mechanisms enshrined in international treaties. Fulfilling the rights set out in the Covenants is too important to be left to chance.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of the United States of America, who will speak on behalf of the host country.

Ms. Mendelson (United States of America): As has been noted by many, human rights is a core pillar of the Charter of the United Nations. In the Preamble of the Charter, the Member States "reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small".

The Universal Declaration and the International Covenants on Human Rights are central to achieving that mission. Upon the adoption of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, Eleanor Roosevelt remarked,

> "As we here bring to fruition our labours on this Declaration of Human Rights, we must at the same time rededicate ourselves to the unfinished task which lies before us."

Over the next several years, the international community then worked together to negotiate the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, work which was concluded in 1966. It is the reason why we celebrate today. In signing the International Covenants in 1977, President Carter observed that when a Government ratifies the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, it acknowledges "explicitly that there are sharp limits on its own powers over the lives of its people". The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, meanwhile, recognizes that Governments are the instruments and servants of their people.

Both these Covenants express values in which the people of my country have believed for a long time. As we mark this occasion today, the United States supports the goals of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and strongly reaffirms our commitment to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The United States reiterates its

commitment to human rights in its work in the General Assembly, within the Human Rights Council and across the many other bodies promoting the protection of human rights within the United Nations.

A decade ago, we were one of the strongest supporters of the universal periodic review process, and we remain fully committed to its vital function of guiding Member States to improve respect for human rights domestically. We see that process as extremely valuable, given its universality. It reviews the human rights situation in every country, including our own.

The United States developed six working groups tasked to review and consult with civil society on a range of human rights issues — including civil rights and non-discrimination; criminal justice; economic, social and cultural rights; indigenous issues and the environment; national security; immigration, labour, migrants, trafficking, and children — and domestic implementation and international mechanisms.

Given that the global trend of closing space for civil society threatens the very rights created by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, I want to highlight the important roles of the Special Rapporteurs on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, freedom of expression and the situation of human rights defenders. All three mandates are crucial to protecting and promoting the international human rights obligations in the Covenant. We are committed to the implementation of our obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights because it helps create the environment most conducive for steady progress toward the achievement of the goals of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Experience reveals that when people can exercise fundamental freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly, association, and religion or belief without fear; when they have access to a wide range of ideas, information and opinion; when they can actively participate in the political life of their country and press for reform without reprisal; when laws are instruments of justice and not tools of repression; when journalists and advocates can expose abuse and corruption; and when domestic safeguards protect minorities from the potential tyranny of a Government that fails to guarantee free expression, to respect the will of its people, and to protect the interests of all individuals equally without distinction, then societies become more resilient, more inclusive and more tolerant, innovation spurs economic growth and prosperity, and political change tends to be peaceful.

Today, as we commemorate the Covenants and the hard work of all of those who contributed to their creation, we remind ourselves about the current state of the world and the threats to the International Bill of Rights. We must work together to ensure that the human rights treaty bodies, the Human Rights Council and other human rights mechanisms within the United Nations are effective and enable respect for human rights worldwide.

Finally, the United States reaffirms its commitment to advancing and supporting human rights in the United Nations system and advancing human rights, fundamental freedoms, human dignity and prosperity internationally and in the United States.

The President: The Assembly has thus concluded the commemorative meeting to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 68.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.

United Nations A/71/PV.31

General Assembly
Seventy-first session

Official Records

31st plenary meeting
Thursday, 20 October 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Thomson ..... (Fiji)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 119

Commemoration of the abolition of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade

Report of the Secretary-General (A/71/170)

The President: The scale of the human suffering caused by the transatlantic slave trade is an affront to humankind's conscience. For over 400 years, this reprehensible practice continued and was the largest forced migration in human history. More than 15 million men, women and children, forced against their will to leave their homes, families and communities, were victims of this inhumane and barbaric system. Many lost their lives as the slave ships crossed the Atlantic Ocean, and those who survived were forced to endure lives of humiliation and brutality.

While people were bought and sold like commodities, human dignity was stripped from all concerned. Forced to work under deplorable conditions on plantations, in textile mills and factories, slaves suffered while others built their fortunes on the back of this miserable system. The commitment of Member States to ensuring that humankind does not forget this dark time of human history is to be commended.

The declaration of 25 March as the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade and the establishment of a permanent memorial — *The Ark of Return* — at Headquarters serve as permanent reminders. They help to educate us and future generations of the horrors of the transatlantic slave trade.

Modern forms of slavery plague our world today, including human trafficking, forced labour and child labour. The memory of the transatlantic slave trade gives us a huge moral imperative to effectively combat modern slavery. That includes providing productive employment and decent work for all, in line with the provisions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Also in memory of the slave trade, racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance must be overcome whenever and wherever we find it.

The historical struggle of enslaved people for freedom and equality took great courage, hope and determination. These qualities, exercised by a long-oppressed people, inspire us today as we work to combat inequality and exploitation. The eventual achievement of emancipation gives us strength today in the enduring human aspiration and defence of freedom.

Mr. Webson (Antigua and Barbuda): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

CARICOM would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/71/170) entitled "Permanent memorial to and remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade: status of the United Nations Trust Fund for Partnerships — Permanent Memorial". We also take note and acknowledge in particular the decision set forth in paragraph 6 of resolution 69/19, recalled in the Secretary-General's

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report, to use any funds remaining in the Trust Fund for the maintenance of the memorial.

We also would like to express our profound gratitude to the Secretary-General for the excellent management of the funds, and to our partners across the various regional groups within the United Nations for their support for the CARICOM initiative to erect a permanent memorial as a lasting tribute to the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. CARICOM also expresses its sincere appreciation to the Member States, organizations and individuals that have made contributions to the Trust Fund for the construction of the memorial.

CARICOM envisions that the memorial, *The Ark of Return*, will speak volumes to hundreds of thousands of people in the years to come. It will encourage people of all races, colours, creeds and cultural and social standing to respect each other as one people. In that regard, CARICOM calls on the Secretary-General to continue to take appropriate steps to enhance world public awareness of the commemorative activities and the permanent memorial at the Headquarters. We also request that the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat continue to take appropriate steps to enhance world public awareness of the commemorative activities and the permanent memorial at the Headquarters, in cooperation with the countries concerned and the relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system.

CARICOM reiterates that the progress we have made should not cause us to rest on any laurels. In fact, quite to the contrary, we should redouble our efforts and use all means at our disposal to combat racism and eliminate racial discrimination. The modern-day manifestations of slavery should be countered with all our might. We who have come out victorious from the injustices and inequity of slavery should be at the vanguard of ensuring that this tragedy never occurs again.

Mrs. Rodríguez Abascal (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the Secretary-General for the report (A/71/170) being discussed today.

The slave trade and the legacy of slavery are the root causes of profound social and economic inequalities, hatred, fanaticism, racism and prejudice that today continue to affect people of African descent. At the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in Durban in 2001, which recognized that slavery and the transatlantic slave trade would qualify today as crimes against humanity, the historical leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro stated,

> "The inhuman exploitation imposed on the peoples of three continents, including Asia, marked forever the destiny and lives of over 4.5 billion people living in the Third World today, whose poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and health rates, as well as their infant mortality, life expectancy and other calamities — too many, in fact, to enumerate here — are certainly awesome and harrowing. They are the current victims of that atrocity, which lasted centuries, and the ones who clearly deserve compensation for the horrendous crimes perpetrated against their ancestors and peoples."

A remedy for, and full compensation to, the peoples and groups affected by a crime as horrific as it is imprescriptible is an inescapable moral duty. In that vein, Cuba supports the judicious request made earlier on behalf of the States members of the Caribbean Community. Similarly, it would be fair to expect special and differentiated treatment for developing countries, in particular in Africa, with respect to their international economic relations.

Developed countries, along with their consumer societies, are responsible for the accelerated and nearly unstoppable destruction of the environment. They have been the main beneficiaries of conquest, colonization, slavery, the transatlantic slave trade and the heartless exploitation and extermination of hundreds of millions of descendants of peoples of the South. Those countries have also been enriched by the unjust economic order imposed on humankind and the international financial institutions created exclusively for and by them as new forms of domination and subjugation.

As a result of that cruel brand of commerce, approximately 1.3 million Africans landed on our island, most of whom came from the sub-Saharan area of the African continent. With their arrival, such African ethnic groups as the Lucumí, Carabalí, Congo, Ganga, Mina, Bibi and Yoruba, among others, had an immediate impact on the colonial society of the time. Following a complex process of transculturation, the Cuban nationality evolved into what is essentially a mixture of Hispanic and African influences. My country is extremely proud of its African roots, which account for our cultural uniqueness and characteristics.

In the various periods of wars that led to the self-determination of the Cuban people, freed slaves and their descendants played a major role.

Despite the economic, commercial and financial blockade against us, Cuba will maintain its cooperation programmes with African, Caribbean and Third World countries as part of the joint efforts aimed at reversing the consequences of the slave trade and the other shameful iterations of capitalism in its phases of colonialism, neocolonialism and transnational financial domination. Slavery and the transatlantic slave trade are among the most serious crimes perpetrated against humankind that have not been properly addressed, and their consequences on society today have not been appropriately acknowledged.

We reaffirm the importance of further strengthening the activities of the United Nations and other international organizations, such as UNESCO, in this area. That is the least that the international community can do to remedy the crimes of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade perpetrated against humankind.

Mr. Joshi (India): We thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/71/170) on the follow-up to the commemoration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade.

The transatlantic slave trade represents one of the darkest phases in human history, when, several centuries ago, forces of globalization began to shape the modern world. The impacts of the slave trade continue to be felt acutely even today. It is important to understand what the slave trade meant, so that we can draw lessons from our collective history and make sure that it cannot happen again. It is equally important for the younger and future generations to carry that memory.

At its very basic level, the transatlantic slave trade was the manifestation of naked greed and the immoral pursuit of profit coupled with the unbridled abuse of power exercised over the weak. The sheer scale of this crime against humanity is mind-boggling. It lasted for four centuries, destroying lives and communities across generations from vast regions of Africa, South America and the Caribbean — on both sides of the Atlantic. It fundamentally altered the societies, economies and polities in those regions for centuries thereafter. Importantly, it helped achieve great wealth, prosperity and progress for some countries, yet it was built upon unspeakable misery and destruction in distant continents, as a frightening example of what ungoverned and lawless globalization can lead to.

While uprooted African communities have contributed greatly to local economies, they have also contributed immensely to and influenced the arts, culture and life of societies where they now live. However, the deep wounds inflicted by the slave trade continue to fester today. Entire communities, including indigenous communities, continue to face the scars of deep-rooted racial discrimination, oppression and chronic poverty. The wounds are also reflected in the chronic underdeveloped and distorted economies that were deliberately designed for the profit of the elite in the faraway lands in a bygone era.

It is our collective responsibility to prevent the recurrence of crimes and injustices such as those associated with the slave trade. It is our duty to remember the sacrifice that millions of people were forced to make when they were uprooted from their homelands over generations to toil in miserable conditions for the profit of others.

It was therefore satisfying to note that the efforts of the Caribbean Community, supported by African nations and others, finally led to the establishment of the permanent memorial, *The Ark of Return*, last year at the United Nations. India is proud to have joined as one of the lead contributors to United Nations Trust Fund for Partnerships — Permanent Memorial.

The International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, observed on 25 March every year, honours the memory of the millions who suffered under that brutal system and helps raise awareness of the injustice and dangers of racism and prejudice. This year, to mark the Day, India and the Department of Public Information co-organized an exhibition on the history of enslaved East Africans who were taken to India, many of whom rose to positions of military and political authority in our country. The exhibition brings out the comparatively greater social mobility experienced by those individuals in India. UNESCO has also played a key role in organizing and linking programmes through the Slave Route project to spread understanding of the impact and consequences of the slave trade.

Following the abolition of slavery, the colonial Powers turned to using millions of Indian indentured labourers, at virtually no cost, to work on plantations across the world in order to perpetuate their economic

domination. The UNESCO project on the International Indentured Labour Route is another significant effort to preserve the memory and lessons of that era.

We must continue to raise awareness about the slave trade through education and outreach activities in order to promote a greater understanding of how our complex world has been shaped and what can be done to avoid repeating the injustices of the past.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): Today's debate offers us an opportunity to pay tribute to the victims of one of the most heinous crimes committed against humankind, but it also allows us to reflect on the continued relevance of the subject today. Liechtenstein is proud to have contributed to the creation of a permanent memorial, whose presence near the entrance of the General Assembly Building is a powerful reminder not only of the tragedy of the past, but also of the challenges that remain with regard to slavery in our day.

Over a period of centuries, some 15 million men, women and children fell victim to the transatlantic slave trade, one of the darkest chapters in human history. Victims were forcibly removed from their families and homes and transferred overseas in the most appalling and inhumane conditions, resulting in innumerable deaths. Those who survived were subjected to forced labour and abuse and were permanently deprived of the most basic human rights. The monument we have erected is a dignified and important reminder of these terrifying crimes against humanity. It must also serve as a reminder of our common commitment to ensuring the absolute prohibition of slavery in all its forms. Looking at today's reality, we have to admit that we are far from reaching this goal.

An estimated 45 million people live in conditions that qualify as modern slavery — more people than ever before. The scourge of slavery persists, even though its prohibition is a jus cogens norm in international law, indeed one of the most powerful of such norms. Despite the fact that slavery is outlawed universally, human trafficking and enslavement are crimes committed on a large scale and with widespread impunity. Today every single country is affected by modern slavery, which generates billions of dollars every year. Modern slavery and human trafficking do not simply constitute one of the biggest human rights scandals of our time, but they are also one of the most lucrative business models for organized crime.

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in particular has generated fresh and dynamic momentum to address modern slavery in all of its aspects. Modern slavery and human trafficking are mentioned in 3 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The 2030 Agenda therefore gives us the platform to tackle the scourge, not merely as a law-enforcement issue but indeed in a much broader manner.

Given the complexity of the phenomenon, we all have an opportunity to contribute to the achievement of our common goal to abolish modern slavery. Liechtenstein is currently focusing on two aspects in particular.

First, we are trying to address the business side of modern slavery. As it is one of the world's most profitable illegal business models, we can make use of tools that have proven effective in other areas — for example, disrupting financial flows and using relevant data for criminal prosecutions: in short, following the money. We are planning to generate a set of concrete measures that will help enhance coordination among national judiciaries and enable effective prosecutions.

Secondly, we are working to address the enormous impunity gap, with action at the international level. As national judiciaries have systematically failed, there is a clear case for involving and making use of international criminal justice, in particular the International Criminal Court (ICC). The Rome Statute, the founding treaty of the ICC, has jurisdiction over enslavement as both a war crime and a crime against humanity. Given the universal nature of the phenomenon of modern slavery, the Court can play a dual role by creating incentives for States to investigate and prosecute at the national level and by investigating and prosecuting itself in cases where the impunity gap persists. Together with the Court, we will continue to explore options to that end.

Human trafficking and modern slavery have been on the United Nations agenda for years, but we have clearly not been effective in addressing the scourge. We are grateful to see a new momentum from the membership to do better and welcome the upcoming opportunities to do so. Key among them will be the open debate in the Security Council in December as follow-up to the first-ever presidential statement adopted by the Council on human trafficking in armed conflict, in 2015 (S/PRST/2015/25).

As input for the discussion, we organized, together with our partners from the United Nations University,

the United Kingdom and civil society partners, a seminar that has produced a set of recommendations for inclusion in the draft resolution that we believe the Security Council should adopt in December. We presented a report to members in early September and hope that its recommendations, particularly those concerning action, will be widely read and processed. We welcome the leadership of the Council on the topic. At the same time, the phenomena of human trafficking and modern slavery are of course not limited to times of armed conflict, which is why many of the report's recommendation can also be applied outside the context of the Council's work.

Another important opportunity is the upcoming review of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, scheduled for October 2017. We look forward to a well-managed process that will allow us to explore new options for action that we may have neglected in the past and to move forward on the basis of consensus. The review year should also be the moment for us to work towards the universal ratification of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, also known as the Palermo Convention. Next week, together with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and our partners from Austria, Slovenia and Switzerland, we will organize a side event to that end as part of our activities in the context of the women and peace and security debate in the Security Council.

Modern slavery is a complex phenomenon that affects all of us and should leave none of us indifferent. As individuals, policymakers and consumers, we all have an opportunity to make a small contribution to eradicate what is both a human tragedy and a large obstacle to sustainable development. We believe that such action is the best contribution that we can make to commemorate this day in a meaningful way.

Mr. Rattray (Jamaica): Jamaica wishes to thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/71/170) being considered today.

We also extend our gratitude to the United Nations Office for Partnerships (UNOP), which over the years has managed the Trust Fund established to support the permanent memorial. UNOP has operated at the highest levels of professionalism and accountability, thereby demonstrating once again that, as States Members of the United Nations, we can be justly proud of the high calibre of the staff serving our Organization. I offer special thanks to the Secretary-General and to the Deputy Secretary-General, whose support for the permanent memorial initiative has been unwavering from the outset. Their support has not only been symbolic, but has been manifested in specific ways that directly contributed to the success of the project. In fact, the very selection of UNOP, as an entity specifically designated to support the implementation of the project, attests to the importance that was accorded to it by the Secretary-General.

UNOP played a critical role throughout all stages of the project's implementation and ensured that it remained on track and was completed on time and on budget. In addition, it partnered with the Permanent Memorial Committee and with UNESCO to organize the international competition that resulted in the selection of the winning design, *The Ark of Return*. The Permanent Memorial Committee benefited immensely from the professional support provided by UNOP, which acted as the custodian for the United Nations Trust Fund for Partnerships — Permanent Memorial, and I take this opportunity to place on record the Committee's sincere gratitude.

As demonstrated in the report of the Secretary-General, Member States provided the vast majority of the voluntary contributions used to undertake the permanent memorial initiative. We therefore owe an immense debt of gratitude to all Member States for their consistent support of the project. Our special thanks go to the over 100 Member States — a wide range of developed and developing States, drawn from all geographical regions, whether or not directly affected by the transatlantic slave trade — that made financial contributions. That demonstrates the importance that we have collectively attached to the permanent memorial not just as a tangible symbol to honour the victims and recognize those who struggled against the horror of slavery, but also for the role the memorial plays as a reminder of the legacies of slavery and the need for us to take action to address them.

Civil society, the private sector and private individuals also contributed meaningfully to the Fund. We thank these partners for their commitment and support. Their inclusion among the list of contributors demonstrates that the noble ideals surrounding the project resonated with people across the world. It is indeed gratifying that the permanent memorial

represents part of the United Nations commitment to one of its founding tenets, which is that our work here must always be on behalf of "We the peoples of the United Nations".

The Ark of Return is already attracting numerous visitors, including those who are participating in events and tours at the United Nations. We are confident that its aesthetic appeal and universal message will endure and that all who visit it will feel the impact of its continuing message. We recall that its design is purposely sustainable, including its use of solar energy for its lighting and the use of recycled water for its tear drop and fountain features. We fully support the decision of the General Assembly that the balance of funds in the Trust Fund should be retained by the United Nations to ensure the maintenance and upkeep of the memorial, and we take due note of the information provided in the Secretary-General's report that this is being undertaken. We look forward to the permanent memorial continuing to be a source of pride and inspiration to all its visitors over the years to come.

Ms. Mendelson (United States of America): In his memoir, *Twelve Years a Slave*, Simon Northup, a free American who had been enslaved in 1841, wrote,

> "In an hour, perhaps two, my heart leaped to my throat, as the key rattled the door again. I, who had been so lonely and who had longed so ardently to see someone, I cared not who, now shuddered at the thought of man's approach. A human face was fearful to me, especially a white one."

Northup wrote these words after having become a victim of this transatlantic slave industry. He articulated the fear and the experience of one of millions of women, girls, men and boys who lost their freedom, their lives, their families and their dignity as a result of the transatlantic slave trade.

The United States recognizes slavery's enduring impact on the development of our country and that of other countries. Collectively, we must commit to always remembering slavery's devastation, understanding its essence and striving to heal its enduring wounds. Descendants of slaves have made vital contributions to the United States. From the freed slaves who shared their stories to the leaders of the abolitionist movement who propelled progress in the United States, to the early educators and agitators against segregation and lynchings who paved the way for the modern civil rights movement, to leaders in the arts, science and sports, descendants of slaves have made the United States a stronger and better nation.

Descendants of slaves have contributed to our ability as a nation to both confront and acknowledge injustice and to build a more inclusive and just society. This year we made significant strides in our shared work to promote remembrance of the victims of slavery. The down payment we have made towards a permanent memorial at the United Nations is a start. In Washington, D.C., the Smithsonian Institution opened its nineteenth museum, the National Museum of African American History and Culture on 24 September 2016, ensuring that the African American story, its roots and its successes are prominently featured in our nation's capital. As President Obama noted at the opening of the museum,

> "the best history does not just sit behind a glass case; it helps us to understand what is outside the case. The best history helps us recognize the mistakes that we have made and the dark corners of the human spirit that we need to guard against. And yes, a clear-eyed view of history can make us uncomfortable and shake us out of familiar narratives. But it is precisely because of that discomfort that we learn and grow and harness our collective power to make this nation more perfect."

Another way that we memorialize victims of slavery is through our commitment to justice in the present. In our reflection on this day, we do no honour to the victims of the transatlantic slave trade if we fail to confront the modern manifestation of slavery in the trafficking of women, men and children, which continues to plague the world, with estimates of 20 to 40 million victims globally. We can use commemorations such as this one and the International Decade for People of African Descent to deepen our awareness. We can pay respect to those who did not make it through the Middle Passage and to the survivors of these tragic events through such art as *The Ark of Return* — a visible reminder of the past and an inspiration for the future. And we can commit to implementing the Sustainable Development Goal targets on eradicating human trafficking.

As we join together, let us also renew our commitments to do even more to end discrimination and exploitation. The call for "never again" rings true today, and the evidence is clear: while we have come a long way, we have much more to do to stop modern slavery.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item. I thank Member States for their acknowledgment of the great significance of today's commemoration.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 119.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.